MANNEQUIN by CORNELL WOOLRICH

THE saint MAGAZINE

OCT. 50c

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

Murder Strikes at The U. N. in

THE GLASS GRAVESTONE

An Exciting New Story

by JOSEPH COMMINGS

Also

EDWARD D. HOCH

PHILIP KETCHUM

LAWRENCE TREAT

LEIGHLA WHIPPER

LESLIE CHARTERIS

A correspondent, Mr. Donald E. Vail of Lakeland, Florida, writing to *Playboy* in April, pointed out that "While the *intent* of the founding fathers appears to have been to create a Government deriving its powers from the consent of the governed, what they achieved ... is a Government deriving its powers predominantly from the consent of the governed's *ancestors* ... I am sure that a study would reveal that nearly 80% of the laws and regulations that govern our lives were conceived, debated, and passed into law *without the explicit or implied consent of any person now living.*"

The basic truth of this estimate seems evident enough to me without a precise statistical survey; yet it is a truth which had never occurred to me, or, I will bet, to at least 80% of those who have read it between them and now. It is one of those things that must always have been staring us in the face, and yet were too big and obvious to be seen, just as you cannot get much view of the world with your nose to the ground. But once realized, the thought is so seismic and startling that I think Mr. Vail should be canonized as the enunciator of a new maxim in political philosophy, and his theorem should be disseminated until every citizen and voter is actively aware of it.

This alone should help to remove the moral stigma which attaches to those who want to repudiate principles which have been enshrined in statute books, and might relieve the awful ponderousness of the task of getting rid of any law which has once been enacted.

Archivists are always digging up some ancient ordinance from some benighted county which makes it a misdemeanor to wear black boots when riding a horse on Shrove Tuesday, and everyone has a big chuckle, but the law is seldom repealed even if it is never enforced. But laws no less antiquated and out of mesh with the actual spirit and standards of our age are still most solemnly activated and are not regarded as laughable or even to be questioned, which is liable to get you branded as a dangerous radical if not a potential subversive and revolutionist. And it will do you no good to protest that neither you nor any of your contemporaries were democratically consulted about the regulation which you have violated.

If I might be permitted to offer a corollary to what could properly be immortalized as Vail's Axiom, which may be well worth considering at a time when elections are imminent, it is that a Supreme Court should rule invalid any legislation which is not consonant with the declared platforms of the elected representatives who pass it. If the next wastebasketful of campaign promises is anything like most of its predecessors in history, this would at least save the consenting Governed from being swindled out of even what they themselves voted for.

THE saint MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 1966

Vol. 24, No. 3

The Talented Husband 4
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

Mannequin 35
by CORNELL WOOLRICH

The Glass Gravestone 67
by JOSEPH COMMINGS

In Spite of the Devil 87
by LEIGHLA WHIPPER

The Saint in Modern Art — IV ...106
by LESLIE CHARTERIS and JOSEPHINE SCREMIN AICHNER

Music to Murder By 108
by LAWRENCE TREAT

The Saint Crossword 118
A MONTHLY FEATURE

Backfire 120
by PHILIP KETCHUM

What's New in Crime 132
by STEFAN SANTESSON

Let there be Night! 137
by MORRIS HERSHMAN

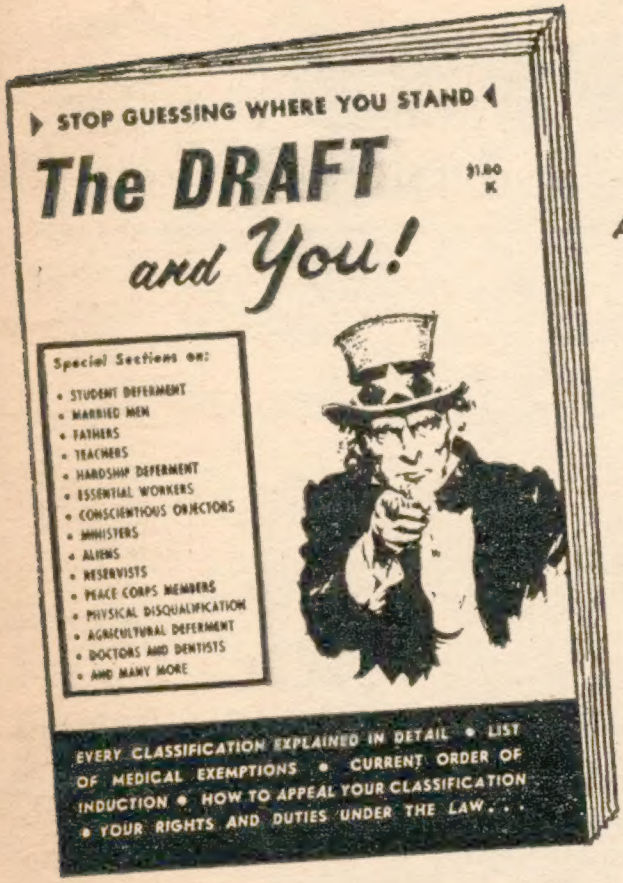
Children of Judas 141
by EDWARD D. HOCH

Leslie Charteris
Supervising Editor

Hans Stefan Santesson
Editor

THE SAINT MAGAZINE, October 1966. Volume 24. No. 3. Published monthly except February, June and November, by Fiction Publishing Company, 30 East 42nd Street, New York 17, New York, by arrangement with Saint Magazine, Inc. Single copy price 50c. Subscription in U.S. and Canada, $5.50 for twelve issues. Subscription in foreign countries, $6.50 for twelve issues. Names of persons and places are fictitious and any use of the name of an actual person or place is purely coincidental. No responsibility can be assumed for unsoliticted submissions. Printed in U.S.A.

Copyright 1966 by Fiction Publishing Company.


STOP GUESSING WHERE YOU STAND
The DRAFT and You!
$1.00
Special Sections on:
• STUDENT DEFERMENT
• MARRIED MEN
• FATHERS
• TEACHERS
• HARDSHIP DEFERMENT
• ESSENTIAL WORKERS
• CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS
• MINISTERS
• ALIENS
• RESERVISTS
• PEACE CORPS MEMBERS
• PHYSICAL DISQUALIFICATION
• AGRICULTURAL DEFERMENT
• DOCTORS AND DENTISTS
• AND MANY MORE
EVERY CLASSIFICATION EXPLAINED IN DETAIL • LIST OF MEDICAL EXEMPTIONS • CURRENT ORDER OF INDUCTION • HOW TO APPEAL YOUR CLASSIFICATION • YOUR RIGHTS AND DUTIES UNDER THE LAW . . .

KNOW WHERE YOU STAND!

ARE YOU CONFUSED ABOUT YOUR STANDING WITH THE DRAFT?

DO YOU KNOW . . .

- Your Obligations and Rights under the Selective Service Law?
- How Your Draft Board Operates?
- How Your Classification Is Determined?
- The Effect of Your Draft Number?
- The Disqualifying Physical Defects?
- The Current Order of Induction?

The GUIDE BOOK containing all of the vital information necessary to answer any questions you may have concerning your DRAFT problems.

$1.00 At All Newsstands, Book, Drug and Chain Stores.

(If your local dealer cannot supply you with a copy, send the coupon below with your check, cash or money order.)

OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS, INC., Dept. SD 1066
30 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 10017

I am enclosing $..... Please send me the copies listed below:

The DRAFT and You

☐ 1 copy $1.25, ☐ 3 copies $3.00, ☐ 6 copies $5.00, ☐ 12 copies $9.00

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State..... Zip Code.....

HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO GET YOUR COPY OF The saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE EACH MONTH?

to get the greatest possible variety within the entire range of mystery, detective and crime fiction by the most eminent and most imaginative and capable writers... *subscribe to* The saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

to get the tables of contents multiple-starred with the names of such greats as John Dickson Carr, E Phillips Oppenheim, Agatha Christie, Baynard Kendrick, Craig Rice, Dorothy L. Sayers and many others . . plus a story or article each month by LESLIE CHARTERIS — the creator of the SAINT, one of the most popular characters in fiction today

. . . *Subscribe to* The saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

if you're having trouble finding the SAINT on your newsstand and want to be sure of getting each issue regularly and on time . . . then . . . just clip the coupon below and mail it together with your check, money order or cash — *and the* The saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE will arrive on time each month.

FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY
30 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.

YES I want the SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE to arrive each month. Please enter my subscription.

12 issues $5.50 ☐ 24 issues $10.00 ☐ 36 issues $14.00 ☐

Additional postage: Foreign $1.00 per 12 issues.

Please remit by check, money order or cash.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY, ZONE, STATE .....

(please print) 1066

the talented husband

by Leslie Charteris

1

THE young man at Heath Row was very impersonal, very polite. He looked up from the passport and said: "Oh, yes. Mr. Templar. Would you step this way, please, sir?"

Simon Templar followed him obligingly from the reception room in which the other passengers from the plane were being processed. The most respectable citizen receiving an invitation like that, no matter how courteously phrased, could have experienced a sensation of vacuum in the stomach; but to Simon such attention at any port of entry had become almost as routine as a request for his vaccination certificate. For the days when harassed police officers and apprehensive malefactors, not to mention several million happily fascinated readers of headlines, had known him only by the name of The Saint were so far behind as to be almost in the province of archaeologists. And of all the countries on earth which had enjoyed

---

Claud Eustace was due to retire within days. The one thing he had not anticipated was that the Saint, learning this, would return to England, anxious that Teal solve his last case — even if he had to do it for him...

Copyright 1954 by Leslie Charteris

the ambiguous benediction of his presence, England, which had been privileged to be the first to feel the full impact of his outlawry, would probably be the last to forget him.

The Saint was very pleasantly unperturbed by the prospect. In fact, he had been looking forward to it for a long time. And as he strolled into the small office to which he was escorted, and the young man went out again and quietly closed the door, he knew that all his optimism had been justified and that this visit would at least begin as beautifully as he had dared to hope.

He gazed across at the cherubic round face of the man who sat there behind the desk disrobing a stick of chewing gum, and his eyes danced like laughing steel.

"Claud Eustace Teal," he breathed ecstatically. "My own dream dog. I mean bloodhound. Have you wondered too if we should ever meet again?"

"Good morning Saint," Chief Inspector Teal said primly. "What brings you back here?"

"Haven't you heard? I'm playing two weeks at the Palladium."

Mr. Teal fought for the somnolent authority in his stare. He had fought for it stubbornly ever since he had started waiting for the plane to land, as he had not had to do for many relatively peaceful years. Even five years of war, which had included the fondest ministrations of the Luftwaffe, now seemed in retrospect like a mere ripple in the long interlude of tranquillity with which he had been favored since he last had to cope with the Saint.

Now that vacation in Nirvana might have lasted no longer than since yesterday. He saw the Saint exactly as he had remembered him in nightmares, outrageously looking not a day older, the tall lean figure just as sinewy and debonair, poised with the same insolently vivid grace, the tanned pirate's face just as keen and reckless; and it was as if the years between had passed over like a flight of birds.

"I'm not doing this because I want to," Teal said heavily. "The sooner we get the formalities done, the sooner you can be on your way. When someone like you comes back here, we have to ask why."

"All right, Claud. I really came back on account of you."

"I said——"

"But I did. Honestly."

"Why me?"

"I heard you were going to retire."

Mr. Teal's molars settled into his spearmint like anchors into a bed of sustaining guck. He said, with magnificent stolidity: "How did you manage to hear that?"

"There was a piece in *Time*, recently, about Scotland Yard. Among some thumbnail sketches of the incumbent hierarchy of beefy brains, your name was mentioned as one of the old-timers shortly to be moved over to the pension list. It's true, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"They gave you a fine record. All your most celebrated successes. The only big thing they didn't mention, for some reason, was how you never succeeded in catching me. But I suppose you gave them the information." Simon surveyed him with affectionate appraisal. "You certainly look wonderful, for an old man, Claud. I'd certainly have recognized you anywhere. The hair a little thinner, perhaps. The jowls a little fuller. The stomach——"

"Just for once," Teal said grimly, "Let's leave my stomach out of this."

"By all means," said the Saint generously. "And it'll leave a lot of room. After all, how much more convex can a thing be than convex?"

Like a man struggling to hold down a paroxysm of seasickness, Chief Inspector Teal felt all the frustrated bitterness of the old days welling up in him again, all the hideous futility of a score of humiliations brought on by his dutiful efforts to put that impudent Robin Hood behind the bars where every law said that he belonged; and enriching it was the gall of a hundred interviews such as this, in each one of which he had not only been thwarted but made farcically ridiculous. He never could understand how it happened, it was as if the Saint could actually put some kind of Indian sign on him, but it was a black magic that never failed. Normally a man of no small presence and dignity, impressive to his subordinates and respected even by the underworld, Mr. Teal could be reduced by a few minutes of the Saint's peculiar brand of baiting to the borders of screaming imbecility.

But now he would not, he must not, let it happen again...

"Yes, I'm retiring," he said doggedly. "Next week. And since you've been away this long, you could have stayed away just a few days longer."

"But I had to be in on your last performance, Claud. And as soon as you heard I was on this passenger list, bless your

old fallen arches, you hurried out here to welcome me and——"

"And tell you, whatever you're thinking of doing here, if you know what's good for you, you'll put it off for at least a week!"

The speech, which had a certain breathlessness built right into it, ended on something like a yelp. Teal had not meant it to. He had meant to speak firmly and masterfully; but somehow it had not come out like that.

"You yelped," said the Saint.

"I did not!" Teal stopped, and cleared his throat with a violence that almost choked him. "I'm just warning you to behave yourself, and we'll let bygones be bygones. Is that clear?"

"Of course," said the Saint earnestly. "In fact, just to prove how forgiving I am, I'm only here to make sure that your career ends in a blaze of glory. I'm going to make sure that you solve your last case—even if I have to do it for you."

"I don't need your help."

"Why, is it going that well?"

"Quite satisfactorily, thank you."

"You've got the goods on him already?"

"It isn't my business to get the goods on anyone," Teal said ponderously. "Just the evidence, if there has been a crime."

"But you're reasonably sure the guy is guilty?"

"I think so. But proving it is another matter. These Bluebeards are pretty tricky to . . . But what the devil," Teal blared suddenly, "do you know about the case?"

"Nothing," said the Saint blandly. "Except what you're telling me."

The detective glared at him suspiciously.

"I don't believe you."

"You pain me, Claud. Do you think I'm a liar?"

"I've known it for twenty years," Teal said hotly. "And let me tell you something else. You're not coming back and getting away with any more of your private acts of what you call justice. If anything happens to Clarron, I'll know damn well who——"

"Clarron?"

"Or Smith, or Jones, or Tom, or Dick, or Harry!" shouted Teal, and knew just how lame a recovery it was.

Simon lighted a cigarette.

"Clarron," he murmured. "Well, well. Where is he living right now?"

"I suppose you want me to believe you don't know that too."

"Once again," said the

Saint reproachfully, "a more sensitive soul might take offense at your delicate insinuations that I fib."

Mr. Teal made a last frantic clutch at a self-possession which had already assumed some of the qualities of a buttered eel.

"Just let me tell you," he said in a labored voice, "that if I catch you going anywhere near Maidenhead——"

"Maidenhead?" mused the Saint. "A charming spot. I've been wanting to see it again for years. And somebody told me only the other day that an old pal of mine is now running the famous pub there on the river. As a matter of fact, that's one of the first places I was planning to visit. I might even drive straight out there, and skip London entirely."

"If you do," yammered Teal apoplectically, "I'll——"

His voice strangled incoherently as the Saint's mocking brows lifted over clear cerulean eyes.

"What will you do, Claud? It's still a free country, isn't it? Maidenhead hasn't been made a Forbidden City. Hundreds of tourists go there without being arrested. I don't see why you should pick on me... I don't even see why you should keep me here any longer, if you feel so unfriendly. So may I get my bag from the Customs and breeze along?" The Saint hitched himself lazily off the corner of the desk where he had rested one hip for a while. "But if you do think of some crime to charge me with, I hope you'll run down and make the pinch yourself. It'll give the natives a laugh. You'll find me at Skindle's."

2

"You must forgive the wop kind of welcome," Giulio Trapani said, releasing Simon from an uninhibited bear-hug. "But it is so good to see you again!"

"It's good to see you," said the Saint. "And as a contrast with the Scotland Yard treatment I got at the airport, I wouldn't care if you kissed me."

He sat up at the bar, and Trapani went behind it and brushed the bartender aside.

"I mix it myself," he said ebulliently. "Whatever you'd like."

"At this hour, just a pint from the barrel—warm, flat, nourishing, and British. I was thinking about it all the way over on the plane. It may be an acquired taste, but it's still the only beer in the world that tastes like a meal."

"It still isn't the same as

before the War," Trapani said, setting a tankard before him. "But this is the best you can get."

"Nothing is ever the same, after enough years," said the Saint.

He drank deeply and contentedly. The brew still tasted good, without its forebears near enough for easy comparison.

"You've made a change too," he said. "This is a lot more pub than the old Bell at Hurley."

"Skindle's, Mr. Templar, is a hotel."

"A good hotel should also be a good pub."

"I try to make it a good pub too—with trimmings."

Simon nodded, and glanced for a moment over the river. It was still early in the season, but it was one of those warm sunny days of almost unbelievable balminess which the climate of Britain can produce as capriciously as if it will inevitably snatch them back under a mantle of rain, cold, or fog; and on that pleasant reach of the Thames the skiffs and punts were moving up and down, drifting with their own portable radio or phonograph music or propelled by vigorous and slightly exhibitionistic young males, with girls in bathing suits or print dresses reclining on gay cushions as luxuriously as any Cleopatra on the Nile, exactly as they had done when he was last there; and he thought that some things like that might survive all changes.

A girl came in from the river side, in shorts, giving away legs that men would have spent money to see across a row of footlights, with dark rumpled hair and the face of a thoughtful pixie; and the Saint turned away again with some reluctance.

"And you," Trapani was saying eagerly. "How is everything? You didn't really have any trouble, of course?"

"Not really."

"And you're going to relax here and have a good time. I'm so glad that you heard about me and came here. Is there anything you want, anything I can do? You only have to ask me."

Simon put down his tankard and looked up from it speculatively.

"Well, Giulio, since you mention it—would you happen to know anyone living around here by the name of Clarron?"

"Why, yes. Mr. Reginald Clarron. I think his house is on the river, quite near here. I don't know him personally, but I've heard of him."

Trapani flashed a quick look around the bar. It might

have been nothing but the automatic vigilance of a professional host, but Simon noticed it. There were not many customers just then—the girl with the legs who had just come in, who was being served a Martini, two young men in flannels who were drinking Pimm's Cups, a thin elderly man in a dark suit with the anxious air of a traveling salesman, and a stout middle-aged woman in long-sleeved black dress, with a cupola of carroty hair capped with a pie-dish straw hat trimmed with some kind of artificial fruit salad, who was sipping a glass of port in the corner. She looked, Simon thought, like the prototype of every comic housekeeper he had ever seen in vaudeville.

"What sort of a guy is he?" Simon asked.

"A very distinguished-looking gentleman. Very charming, I've heard. But he doesn't go out much. His wife is an invalid. She had a terrible accident a few months ago. But if you know them, I expect you heard about it."

"Just how did it happen?" Simon evaded innocently.

"They were out shooting together. He put down his gun to help her over a fence, and it went off and shot her. His own gun. They saved her life, but her spine was permanently injured. Of course, he can never forget it. He spends all his time with her." Trapani had lowered his voice discreetly, and his glance flicked away again for a moment. He leaned over and explained in an undertone: "That woman in the corner is their housekeeper."

Her ears must have been abnormally sharp, or perhaps it was not too hard to interpret the furtive glance and the lowered voice, but the woman allowed no doubt that she had taken in the whole conversation.

"Indade I am," she called out in a rich cheerful brogue. "And a sweeter master an' mistress I niver worked for. Jist as devoted as if they were on their honeymoon, an' her so patient an' forgiving, an' himself eatin' his heart out, poor man, with an awful thing like that on his conscience. Begorra, if anyone says a word aginst him, they'll be answerin' for it to me."

"I've never heard one, Mrs. Jafferty," Trapani assured her hastily.

"Sure an' it'd bring tears to the eyes of a potato to see them together, with himself waitin' on her hand an' foot, readin' to her or playin' cards with her or whativer she has

a mind for, an' bringin' flowers from the garden ivery day."

She squeezed herself cumbrously out from behind the little table, picked up a market bag that bulged as bountifully as her figure, and waddled across towards the Saint.

"An' why would you be askin' about them, sorr—if I may be so bold?"

"A friend of mine said I should look them up, if I happened to be around here," Simon answered.

He had to think quickly, for this was a little sooner than he had expected to need a ready answer. And her eyes were very sharp and inquisitive.

"I'm on me way home now, sorr, with a bite for their dinner. If you'd be tellin' me the name, I could tell them what to look forward to."

"This was a friend of Mr. Clarron's former wife. He mightn't even remember her. A Mrs. Brown."

"From America, maybe? Mr. Clarron's late wife was an American lady, they tell me."

"Yes," said the Saint gratefully. "From New York."

"And your name, sorr, in case you should be callin'?"

"This is Mr. Templar, Mrs. Jafferty," Trapani said.

Simon gazed at him gloomily.

"I'll tell him you were askin'," Mrs. Jafferty said. "And good day to ye, gentlemen."

She hitched up her bag of groceries and bustled busily out.

"I'm sorry," Trapani said. "Did I do wrong? You hadn't told me you wanted to be incognito."

"Forget it," said the Saint. "I hadn't had a chance to. It's not your fault."

He emptied his mug and put it down, and Trapani picked it up.

"Another? Or do you feel like some lunch?"

"Mr. Templar is having lunch with me," said the girl with the legs.

Simon Templar blinked. He turned, with a cigarette between his lips and his lighter halted in mid-air. Finally, he managed to light it.

"If you say so," he murmured. "And if Giulio will excuse me."

"I excuse you and congratulate you," Trapani beamed.

The girl drained her cocktail and came over, putting out her hand as the Saint stood up.

"I'm Adrienne Halberd," she said.

"I'd never have recognized you."

She laughed.

"That may take some explaining. But do you mind if I rush you off? I'm expecting a phone call at home, and I've got to get back for it."

"I'll see you later," Simon told Trapani.

She was on her way to the other door, and he followed her.

"I walked over," she said as they came out in front of the hotel. "But I expect you've got a car."

"That rented job over there."

They got in; and she said, pointing: "That way, to the right, and I'll tell you where to turn."

Simon spun the wheel and relaxed, letting cigarette smoke float from mildly amused lips.

"And now that we're alone," he said calmly, "may I ask any questions? Or do we go on playing blindfold chess?"

"All of a sudden? You didn't argue when I practically kidnaped you."

"I never argue with legs like yours, darling. But sometimes I ask questions."

"You *are* the Saint, aren't you?"

"True. But my mind-reading gifts have been slightly exaggerated."

"You were asking about Reggie Clarron."

"Which should prove that I didn't know much about him."

"You knew he'd been married before."

"An inspired guess. A fat friend of mine happened to tag the name 'Bluebeard' on him, rather carelessly, just a few hours ago. Bluebeards, if you remember, don't get much of a rating with only one wife. It was worth taking a chance on."

"All right," she said. "I took a chance on you. He's only had two so far, I think; but you might help to nail him before he finally manages to kill the third. Not to mention saving the prospective fourth."

The Saint raised his eyebrows.

"He has one picked out already?"

"Me," said the girl.

3

The dining alcove was one corner of the living room of her cottage, sharing the row of gaily curtained windows that looked out over the green lawn that sloped down to the river bank. They sat there over some excellent cold roast beef and salad and mustard pickles, and the Saint sipped a tall glass of Guinness.

"He isn't a mystery man at

all," Adrienne Halberd said. "That's what makes it so difficult."

"One of those open-book boys?" said the Saint.

"Absolutely. He went to a good school, where he didn't get into any particular trouble. Then he became an actor. He never made any hit, but he managed to make a living. He didn't care much what he did, as long as it was something theatrical. He got married the first time when he was twenty-five. He and his wife were both in the chorus of some revue. Later on they joined up with one of those troupes that used to play on the piers at the seaside in the summer. He was about thirty when she got drowned in a boating accident."

"Why did he wait that long?"

"It wasn't so long after she'd inherited some money from an uncle in Australia; and right on top of that they'd taken out mutual insurance policies."

"So then he became a capitalist."

"He still wasn't so awfully rich, but he moved up a notch. He helped to produce some shows in London, which were mostly flops. But he always got other people to invest with him, so his own money lasted longer than you'd think. He was getting a bit short, though, when he married his second wife."

"The American?"

"Yes. That was after the War, when the tourists started coming over again. He married her, and they went to America together—after taking out insurance policies for each other. Six months later she was electrocuted. She was lying in the bath listening to a small radio, apparently, and it fell in."

"Just doing his bit to improve Britain's dollar balance," Simon remarked.

"Then it was the same story all over again— a night club, plays, a film company that never produced anything, and some other business schemes. Never anything crooked that you could put your finger on, except that his partners somehow always lost more money than he did. And about a year ago he married the present Mrs. Clarron."

"He sounds like a real cagy operator. At least, until that shooting accident misfired—if we should use the expression."

She nodded.

'That was when the Southshire Insurance Company got very interested, as I told you. Being stuck three times in a row was a bit too much. Of

course it *could* all be coincidence, but it had to be looked into."

Simon regarded her appreciatively.

"They're not so stupid. I'd have taken a long time to spot you as a detective."

"It's a new discovery," she said spiritedly. "They found out that investigators could do a lot more if they didn't look like investigators, and somebody told them that a woman with brains isn't obliged to look like a hippopotamus."

He grinned.

"I must tell Teal that the same could apply to policemen," he said.

"What does he think about you butting in—or doesn't he know?"

"Oh, he knows all right, and he disapproves strongly. But there's nothing he can do about it. I told him that the insurance company stood to lose ten thousand pounds if Clarron managed to get away with killing another wife, and they couldn't afford to bet that much on Scotland Yard being smart enough to stop him."

Simon chuckled aloud.

"I'm beginning to think of you as a soul-mate. But you still haven't told me how you visualize me in this set-up."

"In rather the same way," she said seriously. "I know it'll sound ridiculous, but I've always been your wildest fan. I started reading about you in my teens, and idolizing you in a silly way. I can't have altogether grown out of it. When I heard you asking about Clarron in Skindle's, and heard your name, it just hit me like a mad flash of inspiration. I'd give anything to get even with Teal for the patronizing way he's talked to me, and I knew you'd sympathize with that, and besides, this case would be a great big feather in my cap. That is—if we could get together. . ."

The Saint finished his plate and leaned back. The tranquil glow that he felt was fueled by more subtle calories than a good meal satisfyingly washed down. For his luck, it seemed, was as unchangingly blessed as ever. He had been in England only a few hours, and already the old merry-go-round was rolling at full throttle in his honor. A problem, a pretty girl, and Chief Inspector Teal to bedevil. What more had he ever asked? It was as if he had never been away.

"You just got yourself soul-hitched, darling," he said. "Now what's the music you think we might make together?"

"I've told you everything I

know, for a start. But what do *you* know?"

"Not another thing. The worthy watchdogs of the Yard undoubtedly spotted my name in a routine check for incoming undesirables, and Teal came huffing out to the airport to warn me to keep my nose clean. I knew that Teal had to be working on some case, even if he is retiring; and whatever it was, I figured I could do a memorable job of lousing it up for him."

"You mean you didn't know about Clarron before?"

"Teal took it for granted that I did, and let out the name. Then I needled him some more, and he mentioned Maidenhead. That was plenty for me to start on."

She stared at him with sober brown eyes, and bit her lip.

"That's rather disappointing."

"I've done plenty with less, in my time," he said cheerfully. "But you're still holding something back. What was that about you being the next victim?"

"Oh. Yes. You see, I've got to know him quite well. He thinks I'm a young widow with money."

"And that you might be available if only he were free?"

"That's right. That's why I talked the insurance company into letting me rent this cottage, to make it easy. It's right next door to his house."

The Saint raised his eyebrows over the cigarette he was lighting.

He got up and stood at the window. Looking out at an angle, he still could not see the other house; and he recalled that when they arrived at the cottage he had not clearly seen an adjoining house, since the front of the cottage was well screened with trees; but in the back only a low hedge separated the lawns that went down to the river.

"I've done more than that," Adrienne said. "Once I got him over here, and pretended to be a bit tight, and more than hinted that when my imaginary husband was ill with pneumonia I'd helped to make sure that he didn't get over it."

"The soul-mate approach again?"

"It was a trick I read about in a mystery story. But it didn't work on him. He's too —what did you call it?— cagey, even to fall for that."

A man had come into sight on the next lawn, at first inspecting a stretch of hedge with the diagnostic eye of an amateur gardener, then turning and looking back over it

towards the cottage. Then he walked down a little farther and came through an opening in it.

"We'd better hurry up and think of a new approach that includes me," said the Saint. "Lover Boy is coming to call."

4

Mr. Reginald Clarron's failure to achieve any notable success on the stage was only due, he would always be convinced, to the cloddish stupidity of the public. About his own outstanding talents he had no doubt whatsoever. Where lesser thespians played their parts for a couple of hours behind the footlights, he could sustain his for twenty-four hours a day, with no help from a script, and sell them to an audience that did not have to be pre-conditioned by the atmosphere of a theater. He prided himself on having every flicker of expression and every inflection of voice under conscious control at every moment. It would be trite to observe that he would have made a formidable poker player: he already was.

He had a passably good-looking face without a single distinctive feature, but like a good showman he applied distinction to it with the full cut of his artistically long but carefully brushed gray hair and a pair of glasses with extra heavy black frames, so that a recognizable caricature might have been made of those two items alone with no face shown at all. His figure, at least as far as it was ever displayed to the public, was most commendable for a man of fifty-five; and only a certain fleshiness around the chin betrayed a tendency to embonpoint which skilful tailoring was able to conceal elsewhere.

He had not batted an eyelid when he heard the name Templar, although instinct told him that there was only likely to be one Templar who might be making inquiries about him. He still could not imagine how that Templar could have become interested in him, but he had read enough to believe that the Saint's nose for undetected crime verged on the supernatural. Nevertheless, he was not going to let himself be stampeded by the uncomfortable fact, which he believed was the main reason why less astute malfeasors had been the Saint's easy prey.

"I can't imagine what the man can be up to," he told his wife boldly, for he was clever enough never to create complications for himself with lies or evasions that were not

strictly necessary. "I'm quite sure that poor Frances never mentioned a friend called Mrs. Brown. The very name is an obvious subterfuge."

"I do hope he isn't after my jewels," Mrs. Clarron said.

She touched the sapphire pendant that showed in the open neck of her bed jacket, with fingers glittering with diamond and ruby rings. Except for being propped up on pillows, she looked as if she had been decorated for a grand entrance at a first night at the opera.

Mr. Clarron pursed his lips.

"I don't want to alarm you, my love, but that's quite a possibility. I still wish you'd let me put them in a safe deposit for you. To keep fifty thousand pounds' worth of jewels in the house, these days, is simply asking for trouble."

"Please don't start that all over again,dear," she pleaded wanly. "They're insured, aren't they? And since I can never go out and show them off again, wearing them for you is the only pleasure I've got left. I know you can't understand how a woman feels, but it does make me happy. And they *are* mine, after all."

Mr. Clarron stoically refrained from arguing. He had already devoted some of his best performances to that theme, without making any impression on her whimsical obduracy.

It had been somewhat of a shock to him when, shortly after their marriage, he had discovered that the millionaire's baubles which she displayed so opulently were not complemented by any proportionate resources in the bank. Her late husband, who had catered to her obsession by showering precious stones on her like a sultan, had apparently mortgaged his business assets so improvidently to do it that after his death they had barely realized enough to pay the inheritance taxes. Not that her value in gems alone was anything to be sneezed at, but it was less than Mr. Clarron had been counting on. And her fanatical refusal to let the jewels out of her own custody for a moment had made it plain that nothing but a third widowhood would show him an appreciable profit.

However, a recent brainstorm had shown him how her jewelry could be made to return a double dividend, and he was quite glad that the original accident he had planned for her had failed and left him the chance to improve on it.

"Very well, my dear," he said. "But if he should call

here and I happen to be out, you must refuse to talk to him on any pretext."

"I wouldn't dream of it. I'd be completely terrified. And I think you should warn the police about him at once."

"Of course, I should have done that already," he said.

Looking up from the garden at Adrienne Halberd's cottage, he was troubled by another consideration. He was forewarned that she had been in the bar at Skindle's when the Saint was asking about him, but he had no way of knowing what might have developed between them later. With unlimited confidence, he decided to take that bull also by the horns.

It was a blow under the belt when the girl admitted him at the back door and he instantly saw the lean bronzed man lounging on the couch under the window as if he owned it.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I had no idea you had company."

"Don't be silly, Reggie," she insisted breezily. "Come on in. We were just talking about you, anyway. This is Mr. Templar. I picked him up at Skindle's. I heard him asking about you there, so we got talking."

Mr. Clarron's acting ability and stage presence still somehow stood by him.

"Mrs. Jafferty told me," he said, with absolute naturalness. "But frankly, I just can't place that Mrs. Brown you spoke of."

"I'm not surprised," said the Saint. "I didn't mean to spring it on you quite so bluntly, but Mrs. Brown was her sister. Mr. Brown is better known to the FBI as Bingo Brown, the racket boss of Baltimore."

"The Saint knows all the gangsters, of course," Adrienne contributed blithely. "He started telling me such fabulous stories about them, I just had to bring him home to hear more."

"Indeed?" Mr. Clarron's voice was impeccably distant. "But in this case I'm sure he's mistaken. My late wife had no sister."

"I didn't expect you'd have heard of her," said the Saint. "When she took up with Bingo, her family disowned her and agreed never to mention her name. But she was still very fond of your late wife, and ever since that odd accident she's been pestering Bingo to find out if you were a right guy. So when I happened to run into him just before I was leaving, he asked me to look you up. Of course it's absurd, but—"

"I think you have put it in

a nutshell, Mr. Templar," Clarron said icily. "But if you want me to discuss this preposterous fabrication, I must do it another time." He turned to the girl. "I only dropped over, my dear, to ask if you would be home this evening. I have to run up to London on business, and won't get back until late; and it's Mrs. Jafferty's night off. I know everything is all right, but I'd just feel happier to know that my wife could call you in an emergency."

"Of course," Adrienne said awkwardly.

"Thank you, my dear."

Mr. Clarron bowed to the Saint with courtly frigidity, and walked out without faltering.

He was immune to panic—the career of a successful Bluebeard calls for coldblooded qualities that would scarcely be comprehensible to more temperamental murderers. But in much the same way as he had heard of the Saint, and perhaps less critically, he was well imbued with legends of the implacable code of America's gangdom.

He still had not lost his head. He could conceive that the fantastic thing that the Saint had suggested might be true, without actually having to concede that it was. But that only meant that he must delay no longer about setting in motion a plan that he had already worked out to the ultimate detail—had, in fact, already prepared all the mechanical groundwork for.

If anything, the Saint's inexplicable and unforseeable intrusion might even be woven in to its advantage, by such an uncommon genius as his.

He had realized this with an almost divine supra-consciousness while Adrienne Halberd was still introducing the Saint, and had spoken the essential words without even thinking about them, impelled by nothing but his own infallible instinct.

Mr. Reginald Clarron walked back up the lawn to his own house without the slightest misgiving, concerned solely with the rather tiresome minutiae of killing his third wife that night.

5

Although the longest run of any play which Mr. Clarron had helped to produce had been four weeks, he could legitimately claim to be a West End producer, and as such he received a continual stream of plays for consideration. The cream of the crop, of course, went first to other producers with a more encouraging rec-

ord of hits; but Mr. Clarron read all that came to him, always on the lookout for anything good enough for a promotion from which he at least would benefit, and always dreaming that some day something would fall into his hands of which he would be the first to see the potentialities, which would rocket him to wealth and prestige overnight.

From the manuscripts on his desk he selected the one which had lately impressed him the most, and telephoned the author, who lived in London.

"I really think we might do something with your play, my boy," he said. "I'd like to discuss just a few minor revisions with you. I don't get to town very often, but I have to run up this afternoon. Could you manage to have dinner with me? . . . Fine! Let's make it rather early — I don't want to be away from home too long."

Then he called his dentist, complained of a maddening toothache, and persuaded the man to squeeze him in for a few minutes at the end of the day.

Thus he consolidated his reason for leaving his wife alone on what had already been announced as Mrs. Jafferty's evening off. If the dentist could find nothing wrong with his teeth, the pain could always be attributed to neuralgia.

To his wife he said: "Since I have to make the trip, confound it, I really ought to see the fellow who wrote that play we read last week. I was just talking to him on the phone, and he told me that one of Rank's men is very excited about it. I'd hate to let it get away, with the picture rights half sold already."

"Of course, dear," she said. "I'll be perfectly all right, if you'll fix my table for me like you've done before."

"No one ever had such a wonderful wife and deserved it less," he said, with considerable truth.

The table was a piece of hospital furniture, built like a traveling bridge and high enough to span the bed. A system of ropes and pulleys which he had rigged up enabled her to pull it up to her or push it away as she wished.

From the kitchen he brought up linen and silver, china and glass, bread and butter, sugar and cream, a bowl of strawberries, a decanter of wine, an electric coffee pot, and an electric chafing dish of Irish stew which she would only have to plug in and heat when she was ready.

Into the stew he had thoroughly stirred a certain tasteless drug which is much too easily obtainable to be freely mentioned in this connection, which in sufficient quantity induces profound sleep in about half an hour and death shortly afterwards. Taking no chances on a capricious appetite, Mr. Clarron had used enough to put away four people.

"It smells heavenly," he said, lifting the lid and sniffing. "But I kept some back for my lunch tomorrow, so you needn't try to save any for me."

He made sure that the television set was in the right position for her to watch from the bed—it had a remote control that she could operate from the night stand—made sure that all was in order with the devices that would make it unnecessary for her to be taken to the bathroom, saw that her books and magazines were within easy reach, checked the table again, fluffed up her pillows, and said: "Is there anything else you might possibly need, my love?"

"Nothing," she said. "Just hurry back and spoil me some more."

Mr. Clarron kissed her tenderly on the forehead. He felt pretty good himself. He was giving her the most humane death he could think of, even more peaceful than the lightning extinction of her predecessor. He was glad that he was not callous enough to hurt women. Only his first wife could really have suffered at all in her passing; but he had been quite an amateur then.

He was in the best of spirits when the young playwright met him at his club.

"The Irish stew is very good tonight, sir," said the dining-room steward.

It seemed almost like an omen.

"My favorite dinner, and I thought I was going to miss it. Not that it could be half as good as Mrs. Jafferty's—our housekeeper," Mr. Clarron explained to his guest. "She makes the best you ever tasted. Of course, she would. Irish as Paddy's pig, but a marvelous old biddy. They don't make 'em like that any more these days."

"How long have you had this treasure?" asked the young man perfunctorily.

"Only three weeks — and believe me, my boy, I sleep with my fingers crossed. We've had a bad time with servants. My wife being an invalid makes it specially difficult, it's bound to make extra work. But Mrs. Jafferty

never complains. And to think that I came near not hiring her at all."

"Really?" said his guest politely.

"I got her through an agency, you see, but she didn't have any references. I mean, nothing that I could actually verify. She'd been in her last job for more than twenty years, but then the people had gone off to live in New Zealand and she didn't want to leave England. She had a glowing letter of recommendation, but of course those can be faked. And even the place where she'd been staying since then, she'd only had a room there for a few days, and she'd been out all the time looking for jobs, so they knew nothing about her. I have to be extra careful, you know, because my wife insists on keeping all her jewels in the house."

"A bit risky, isn't it?" said the other, stifling a yawn.

"It wasn't an easy decision to make. But we were getting quite desperate, and if she was as good as the letter said I was afraid of losing her to somebody else while I was waiting for a reply from her last employers in New Zealand. So I decided to take the gamble. And I must say, she seems to be honest to the last halfpenny. I let her do all the shopping, and our bills are the smallest they've ever been... By George, though," Mr. Clarron said with a sudden frown, "a suspicious character did turn up in Maidenhead today, asking where I lived. Wouldn't it be frightful if they were...? Oh, but that's too far-fetched. But I wish I hadn't thought of it just now."

"Talking of suspicious characters," said the playwright, straw-clutching feverishly, "what did you think of the old man who comes to the door at the beginning of my second act? I've wondered if it would be more effective to keep him off the stage a bit longer, to build up the suspense."

Mr. Clarron nodded attentively, and thereafter confined himself admirably to the subject of their meeting. He had sounded most convincing, he thought, in his rehearsal.

He enjoyed his Irish stew. At any moment, he estimated, his wife would be eating hers.

6

"I don't like it," Adrienne Halberd said abruptly.

"Now that you've told me about those jewels of Mrs. Clarron's, I like it a bit less

myself," Simon admitted. "It just might occur to Lover Boy now to improvise a burglary in which she gets bumped off, and try to make it look like my work."

Her pixie face was almost sullen with concentration.

"I expect you could take care of yourself. I'm talking about that story you cooked up about some gangster called Bingo Brown being married to his last wife's black sheep sister, and you being a friend of theirs."

"It was the best I could do in the few seconds we had."

"But don't you see, it might panic him into doing something drastic in a hurry, in the hope of getting away with his loot before you do something to him."

"That was roughly what I had in mind."

"But that would be *helping* to get another wife murdered!"

"When you hinted to him that you'd at least half killed a husband," Simon said, "mightn't that just as well have encouraged him to widow himself, knowing you wouldn't hold it against him?"

"All I hoped was that it might make him *talk* about it. And then, with a tape recorder——"

"Oh, I know. Just like a detective story. But maybe he's read stories too. It might just as well have only encouraged him to get the job over without talking."

She stared at him resentfully.

"Well, if you're so smart, how else can you get evidence against his kind of murderer?"

"It isn't easy, darling. You can only stick close to him and hope that you're close enough when he tries it again."

"But you can't use a human being like—like a sort of live bait!"

"Mrs. Clarron isn't in much more danger, by and large, than she's been all along. Maybe Reggie is a bit more anxious to get it over; but on the other hand there are now two of us keeping an eye on her. We saw Reggie drive away. I've been sitting by this open window ever since, and I have ears like a watchdog. When Reggie or anyone else comes near that house, I'll know it."

"But you can't stay here all night."

"I can think of worse fates."

"You might think of some better dialogue."

"I'm here now," he said practically. "And I'll stay for dinner, if I'm invited."

She stood up and paced restlessly.

"Oh, you can stay. I think you'd better. I've got some chops in the Frig."

"And some more beer?"

"You've just drunk the last I had."

He got up and stretched himself.

"It sounds like a thirsty vigil. While you're toiling over a hot stove, suppose I run out and buy some more. I'm about out of cigarettes too, anyway."

She hesitated an instant.

"No, I'll go," she said. "I'd rather you stayed here. If anything violent did start to happen next door, I think you'd be more use than I would. But only for brawn, I mean!"

He thought that over for as brief a moment, his quizzical eyes on her; and then he shrugged.

"Okay, Brains," he said goodhumoredly. "Would you like to take my car?"

"I've got my own, thanks. I'll throw on a skirt and be back in a minute."

It was, of course, easily fifteen minutes before she drove into the tiny garage again, and already she had seen that the Saint's hired car was no longer outside the cottage.

Even so, she tried frantically to believe for a fraction longer that he might only have moved his car up the road to a less conspicuous place, to make a returning Clarron believe that he had left. She ran into the cottage calling his name, but the empty rooms had no answer.

There was a note stuck in the refrigerator door.

Decided I might only mess things up for you after all, so I pushed off. Thanks, apologies, and good luck.

The signature was a little stick figure with a rakishly tilted halo.

She ran out into the dusk, almost calling his name again. But the only response, she knew, would have been the faint sounds she heard of a radio or television program playing in the house next door. She looked back and up from further down her lawn, and saw the light shining blankly and steadily against the ceiling of an upstairs bedroom window. She rushed back into her cottage and flung herself at the telephone.

7

Mr. Reginald Clarron got off the train at Maidenhead at 10.12 pm, exchanged greetings and a few trivial words about his trip with the

station master, climbed into the car he had parked at the station, and drove home at his normal sedate speed.

He noticed that the strange car which must have been the Saint's was no longer outside the cottage next door, and thought that his auspices might be even better than he had hoped.

As he unlocked his front door—he was glad he would be spared the necessity of faking a burglarious entrance, with all its possible pitfalls, for of course he had let it be known that Mrs. Jafferty had a key—he heard the inexorable voice of a BBC announcer holding forth from the receiver upstairs.

Exactly as he would have done on any similar normal evening, Mr. Clarron took pains to hang up his hat in the hall, stick his superfluous umbrella in the stand under it, pull off his gloves and lay them in the calling-card tray. He would not be so foolish as to omit one iota of his habitual routine. He even went into the kitchen, drew himself a glass of water, and drank it, as he always did before he went to bed.

Then he tiptoed up the stairs and softly opened the door of his wife's bedroom.

The television set was still on, and so was the bedside light, but his wife seemed to be asleep. She lay on her stomach with her face buried in the pillows.

"My love," Mr. Clarron said loudly. She did not stir.

The table was pushed down towards the foot of the bed. A glance verified that she had eaten and drunk the wine, although the bowl of strawberries had scarcely been touched and the coffee cup was two-thirds full. Using his handkerchief, he lifted the lid of the chafing dish and saw that it had almost been emptied. He put the lid back and returned to the head of the bed.

"My dearest," he said, and pulled on her shoulder as if to turn her over.

Her weight resisted him with a curious heaviness; and when he let go she fell back limply, without a sound.

Mr. Clarron suddenly became a whirlwind of activity, for at this point any lapse of more than a few seconds might have to be accounted for.

He hustled out of the room, across the landing, and into his own bedroom. In the top drawer of his dressing table lay a clean pair of white cotton gloves. As he picked them up and rapidly pulled them on, there was disclosed underneath them a light claw-ended crowbar of the type used

for opening small crates — which Mrs. Jafferty had purchased a week ago at the local ironmonger's in the course of her household errands. Mr. Clarron hurried back with it to his wife's bedside.

Her jewels were kept in the top drawer of the bedside table, where she could easily reach them. As a concession to his concern for their safety she had had a combination lock put on it and made a coy secret of the combination, even though he had tried to point out that the drawer was still no stronger than the wood it was made of. He proved this in a matter of seconds with a couple of quick leverings with his crowbar, splintering the front of the drawer out with a pleasantly surprising minimum of noise.

He pulled out her jewel case, opened it on top of the night stand, and rapidly transferred its contents to his pockets. He let the crowbar lie on the floor where it had fallen. He leaned over his wife, unfastened the clasp at the back of her neck, and pulled the necklace and its sapphire pendant from under her. He picked up her hand to twist the rings off her fingers . . .

He did not know precisely what stopped him, whether it was a movement glimpsed out the corner of his eye or the faint squeak and stir of air that went with it. But he turned his head, and with that became frozen.

The door of a massive old wardrobe across the room was swinging stealthily open.

The door itself cut off the light of the bedside lamp from what was inside. But the shadowed opening was still not too dark for him to see, and recognize, the bulgingly bovine shape of Mrs. Jafferty, the unmistakable mound of her atrociously carrot-tinted hair.

Mr. Clarron's intestines seemed to turn into coils of quivering lead, and his lungs sagged through his diaphragm and took all his breath with them. A draught from the North Pole squirmed over his skin and brought out beads of clammy sweat where it touched.

"Faith an' begorra," said the broadest brogue outside Killarney, "if it isn't himself robbin' the trinkets from his poor darlin' wife, and her not cold from his poison an' all!"

There was a breaking point even to Mr. Clarron's adamantine self-control. He turned and ran out of the room, screaming.

He had no idea where he was going or what he was going to do. He stumbled down

the stairs in a pure frenzy of planless flight, flight for its own primitive sake, spurred by the unreasoning need to get away anywhere from the impossible incomprehensible thing that he had seen. Out of the house, anywhere, where he could have one moment's reprieve to encompass the exploding debris of disaster, to try and grab the pieces together and reshape them into some form that would magically ward off utter catastrophe . . .

He threw open the front door and plunged solidly into the comfortably cushioned facade of Chief Inspector Claud Eustace Teal.

Mr. Teal said *"Oof!"*—caught him as he bounced off, and set him upright in the hall.

"What's the matter, Mr. Clarron?" Teal asked drowsily.

As his torpid bulk evacuated the doorway, it revealed two uniformed men on the step outside.

"My wife," Clarron babbled. "Dead in her bed! Drawer broken open—her jewels gone! And Mrs. Jafferty——"

He broke off there. The first words had come out, incoherently enough, but unhesitatingly, with a kind of reflex assurance made glib by the number of times he had mentally rehearsed just such a speech. But after he had blurted out Mrs. Jafferty's name he did not know how to go on. He had never visualized having to say anything about her in her presence.

Mr. Teal, however, did not seem to notice the aposiopesis. He was staring over Mr. Clarron's shoulder, and upwards, with his baby-blue eyes dilating in a most peculiar manner.

"Bejabers," trumpeted a voice of distilled shamrock, "and if it isn't me ould friend the fat boy of Scotland Yard, himself, arrivin' late for the wake as usual."

Mr. Clarron turned, drawn by an awful but irresistible magnetism.

Billowing down the stairs came an exuberant female figure crowned with a bird's-nest of hideous ginger hair.

"She must have done it," Clarron chattered hysterically. "I should never have taken her without references. She was hiding up there——"

"Sure, and is that any way for a gentleman to be talkin', tryin' to put the blame on an honest workin' woman? And himself all the time schemin' to murdher his own wife, the poor soul, an' run off with his fancy lady next door, who I see sneakin' in here already

to be with him before the body is cold!"

Teal glanced back for a moment, at Adrienne Halberd who was sidling in behind the two constables; and turned back to the staircase with a tinge of purple creeping into his rubicund complexion.

"Take off that ridiculous get-up, Saint," he roared, "and let's hear what you think you're up to!"

"Well, if you insist," said the Saint meekly. "But I was just starting to get the feel of the part."

He unbuttoned the oldfashioned black dress, peeled it off, and draped it over the stair rail. Underneath it he wore a kind of upholstered combination garment extending down to his knees and padded in all the necessary places to produce Mrs. Jafferty's voluptuous contours. He took that off and hung it similarly over the rail, where it slid down to join the dress. Completing his descent of the stairs, he removed the orange-colored wig and set it carefully on the banister knob at the bottom.

"It's Templar!" croaked Mr. Clarron. And for one delirious instant he felt inspired, invulnerable. "He did it in that disguise! He was with Mrs. Halberd this afternoon when I said I was going to London. She's probably his accomplice——"

"*Miss* Halberd, "Teal said precisely, "is a police officer, acting under my orders."

"As it eventually dawned on me," said the Saint. "And there never was a Mrs. Jafferty, except when Reginald dressed up in that outfit. Instead of trying to dream up the perfect alibi, which has tripped up a lot of bright lads, he dreamed up the perfect scapegoat. And before he has any more attacks of genius, and before I budge from here, I wish someone would go through his pockets, where they'll find Mrs. Clarron's jewels. And if he has anything to say after that, ask him why he's wearing those white cotton gloves."

8

"What do you mean, it eventually dawned on you that I was with the police?" Adrienne Halberd demanded sulkily.

Simon lighted a cigarette.

"The way you picked me up at Skindle's was rather determined," he said. "But I could swallow that temporarily. When you told me you were investigating for an insurance company, I could take that for a while too. There are such things as female pri-

vate eyes, even if they aren't very often eyefulls. And when you said you'd been a distant adorer of mine since you were in pigtails, it was piling it up a bit tall, but I could still open my mouth that wide. Weird as it may seem, I have met such crazy gals. But with all that build-up, you'd set yourself a lot to live up to. And soon after you found out that I hadn't any information to add to what you'd told me, or any definite plan to let you in on, you changed quite startingly. Gone was the worshiping bug-eyed fan. You became impatient, critical—even caustic. You couldn't see any merit at all in the idea that I adlibbed on two seconds' notice when Reggie started to amble over. And it wasn't such a bad one, either. But it made you almost rude."

"If I remember," she said, "you weren't such a paragon——"

"But I wasn't trying to sell anything, darling. You had been. And the transformation was just too sudden. A real fan would have thought anything I suggested was marvelous, no matter how screwy or dangerous it sounded. And then I realized something else. This was Claud Eustace's last big case, and he'd warned me to keep out of it, but I told him I intended to stick my nose in anyway. Yet I came straight to Maidenhead, and none of the local constabulary was around to meet me and back up Teal's order.. More surprising still, there wasn't even a vestige of a cop anywhere around here, keeping tabs on Reggie or trying to save Mrs. Clarron from being bumped off. So at last I connected. The cop had to be you. Teal had plenty of time to phone you while I was driving down from Heath Row, tell you I was headed for Skindle's, tell you to pick me up there, rope me, keep me handy. The explanation you had to hatch up between you wasn't so hard to invent; but I could almost hear the wheels whirring in Teal's fat head, and see his buttons popping with pride at his own brilliance."

Chief Inspector Teal thumbed open a tiny envelope of spearmint and mailed the contents in his mouth.

"All right," he said trenchantly. "But what happened after Miss Halberd left you in her cottage?"

"After she left me to phone you for more advice," said the Saint smoothly, "I went over those random hunches again and convinced myself. Then I knew I wouldn't have much more time to work on my own, and I really was se-

riously worried about what my appearance and my story might rush Reggie into doing. And I decided I just had to see if I couldn't find a clue in his house—which you couldn't have tried without a search warrant. You know my methods, Claud. Impulsive. So I picked up the phone and called Mrs. Clarron, and said I was the local police."

"Falsely representing yourself to be a police officer," barked Teal.

"For which I might easily get fined a few pounds," said the Saint sadly. "I said that Mr. Clarron had asked us to keep an eye on her on account of a suspicious character in the neighborhood; and it was really a break when she wasn't a bit surprised. Reggie had warned her about the Saint. So I asked if we might send a man over to make sure that everything was all right. She said yes, but she couldn't let him in. I said that was all right, Mr. Clarron had left us a key. I moved my car up the road, walked back, and jiggered the lock, which is a very easy one."

"He broke in," jabbered Mr. Clarron forlornly. "He admits it!"

It was not a very effective effort, considering the heap of jewels from his pockets which one of the constables was laboriously inventorying while the other counted them on to an outspread handkerchief; and Teal glanced at him almost pityingly.

"I told her I wanted to check all the windows," Simon went on, "which gave me an excuse to roam through the house. I didn't have to roam far. In Reggie's bedroom, the first thing that caught my eye was a typical old theatrical trunk. I opened the lid; and right on top was this wig, and underneath it those dowager-size falsies."

He paused for a dramatic moment which he could not deny himself, releasing a leisured streamer of smoke.

"It was all clear in a bolt of lighting. There was no mistaking that hair—I'd seen Mrs. Jafferty at the pub, as Adrienne can tell you. And she'd told me that he was an actor, and once played with a sort of minstrel troupe. And I could see Reggie's face as I'd met him this afternoon, and of course it was Mrs. Jafferty's, with the powder and rouge and lipstick off and those horn-rimmed glasses added. And I remembered that in those old music-hall skits with a comic charwoman, which Mrs. Jafferty had reminded me of nothing else but, the part was nearly always played by a man."

"Go on."

"What a wonderful gag, Claud! He passes himself off as his own housekeeper, and creates an identity that a dozen tradesmen and villagers will vouch for—only telling his wife that he can't find anyone and he's doing all the housework himself. Being confined to her bed, she never saw him go out or come in in that costume and they never had visitors. So when she's found dead, and her jewels are stolen, and Mrs. Jafferty has disappeared, it's so obvious that he doesn't need much of an alibi. The beetle brains of the CID are so busy combing the country for Mrs. Jafferty that they'd never think of anything else."

"But what did you *do?*" Teal almost howled.

"I didn't stop there. In the top drawer of his dresser I found those gloves he had on, and a small crowbar which is now on the floor of his wife's bedroom where he used it to jimmy her jewel drawer. No doubt someone would swear Mrs. Jafferty bought it. I went to the maid's room. There were a few clothes and personal articles which a woman like that would have—he was that thorough. And I also found this, which you can bet Mrs. Jafferty bought from the local chemist."

He produced a small dark bottle from his pocket and handed it over.

"Believe me, Claud, that was a jolt. I'd hoped to goose him into something rash, but it was meant to be something that I could move in fast and prevent—like p e r h a p s a clonk on the head with that crowbar. And now I was certain that this was the night, with him going to London and Mrs. Jafferty supposedly out. But poison . . ."

Adrienne Halberd w a s reading the label on the bottle over Teal's shoulder, and her face had gone white.

"She had a lovely plate of Irish stew," said the Saint remorselessly. "I said, just to clinch it: 'I bet your cook is an Irish woman.' 'Oh, no,' she said, 'we haven't been able to get a cook for weeks. My husband has to do everything, but he does it so well——'"

A sort of inarticulate sob came from the talented husband; and Mr. Teal somewhat belatedly remembered an official obligation.

"Mr. Clarron," he said formally, "it's my duty to warn you that anything you say will be taken down and may be used in evidence. Now, did you wish to make any statement?"

"I did it," Clarron said hopelessly. "Everything. Just

as he said."

Teal nodded to the constable with the notebook.

"And the one before?"

"Yes. I knocked the radio into her bath."

"What about the first one —the one who was drowned?"

"I killed her too," Clarron said with his head in his hands. "I upset the boat and held her under."

Suddenly the girl thrust herself between them.

"You idiots, all of you!" she cried insubordinately. "We might still save this one. We should be g e t t i n g a doctor——"

"Don't waste his time," said the Saint. "I tried to break it all to Mrs. Clarron, but it was tough going. As you can imagine. She got quite hysterical at one stage; but luckily there was quite a hysterical play on television at the same time, so nobody outside would have noticed much. But at least she lost all her appetite. I took advantage of that to arrange the table as if she'd been eating, and put most of the stew, the wine, and the coffee in other containers, which you can take for analysis if you need it. I got her half convinced, but I knew she was in no condition to play dead when Reggie came in, even if I could have talked her into trying; and she had to do that if he was to book himself all the way to the gallows. So when I heard his key in the lock, I just gave her a little judo tap on the neck." Simon smiled apologetically. "She should wake up any minute now, and all she'll need is an aspirin and a good dinner."

As if on cue, a dull moan reached them from the floor above; and Adrienne ran up the stairs.

9

It was somewhat later when Teal, Simon, and the girl wound up back at the cottage next door.

The uniformed men had taken Mr. Clarron away, and a nurse had arrived to take charge of his wife. Mrs. Clarron had refused to let a doctor be called in with sedatives, but she was quietly and methodically g e t t i n g drunk, which would eventually have a similar effect. The Saint couldn't blame her.

"That's the only ugly thing left," he said. "She's still got to live with the results of Reginald's first a t t e m p t. And I'll always wonder if it wouldn't have been kinder to let her eat that stew."

"Perhaps you won't have to," Adrienne said. "She told me that the specialists had

been talking about another operation that might fix her up."

The Saint's eyes lightened.

"Then maybe it's not so indecent to celebrate after all. And some celebration certainly seems called for. I suppose you did bring some beer when you thought I'd be waiting when you came back, and Claud and I should drink a parting toast."

"You're forgetting," Teal said stodgily. "I don't drink. Fat men didn't ought to drink."

Adrienne made him a cup of tea.

"The one thing that puzzles me," Simon said, "is why you took so long to show up at Clarron's, Claud, after I disappeared from here. Or, put it another way, how you were on his doorstep at the ideal moment."

"After you left Heath Row," Teal said reluctantly, "I came down to the Maidenhead police station and waited for Miss Halberd to get in touch with me. When she reported that Clarron had gone to London, I had a man watch the railway station to let us know when he came back. Then she phoned and told me you'd left, and I hoped you meant it. I came over and joined her here. We were informed as soon as Clarron got off the train, and we started watching his house. I was afraid he might try something desperate soon, after the scare you'd given him, and I could only hope we'd be able to prevent it. As soon as he started screaming, we rushed over."

"But you hadn't spotted that Mrs. Jafferty was purely fictitious."

"Not yet."

"And if I hadn't been there, you still wouldn't have been in time to save Mrs. Clarron's life."

"We might have been able to get her to a hospital in time."

"You wouldn't. But even if you had, you'd only have been looking for Mrs. Jafferty. And even if you'd discovered that she was a phony, you could only have convicted Reginald of attempted murder. It took the fright I threw into him to make him confess everything."

"That's probably true," Teal said grudgingly. "But it still doesn't excuse your interfering and taking the law into your own hands." His voice rose a little. "And one of these days——"

"Now you're forgetting," Simon reminded him gently. "There aren't going to be any more of these days for you. You're retiring, and you'll

only read about me in the papers."

Chief Inspector Teal swallowed.

He looked ahead into a vague Elysian vista in which there were no problems, no apprehensions—and no taunting privateer with unquenchable devilment in his eyes and an impudent forefinger pointing like a rapier at his stomach. It would be very restful; and there would be something lacking.

"That's right," said Mr. Teal. "I was forgetting."

He hauled himself sluggishly to his feet, and put out his hand; and for almost the first time in all those years Simon saw something very like a smile on his round pink apoplectic face.

"I'm rather glad it ends up this way," Teal said. He glanced selfconsciously around him. "But I've still got work to do tonight. And I think Miss Halberd has some apologizing to do which she might rather do in private. The rent's paid on this cottage to the end of the month," he added inconsequently. "So if you'll excuse me——"

"Damn it, Claud Eustace," said the Saint, "I'm going to miss you too."

NEXT ISSUE —

SNIFF
by *Donald Westlake*

SYDELLE
by *Brad Steiger*

THE MYSTERY OF SU CHEN
by *D.K. Findlay*

THE DEALER
by *Howard Schoenfeld*

THE FALL OF FRENCHY STEINER
by *Hilary Bailey*

INSTEAD OF THE SAINT — XIII
by *Leslie Charteris*

— in the December 1966 *THE SAINT MAGAZINE*

mannequin

by Cornell Woolrich

As usual Leone was well in advance of the nightly seven o'clock stampede to quit work and go home. She was the first of them all to reach the bronze statuette with its spray of flesh-colored light-bulbs at the foot of the stairs on the main floor, while the rest of the girls were still only working their way down from the upper floors. Their clamor could be heard coming down the staircase ahead of them. they were like a bunch of noisy school-children when the dismissal-bell has rung.

"Take it easy there!" a voice ordered with phony severity as her feet came off the last step onto the marble floor with a flat, slapping impact.

Startled, she turned her head around, but without stopping, for seven oclock was seven o'clock. It was only the lift-boy, grinning at her. "Who for? You?" she called back with arrogant unconcern as she rushed on ahead to meet the evening.

A new story by Cornell Woolrich — one of the all-time greats in this field — is a literary event. But this is perhaps more than that. In this portrait of a Paris mannequin, one of those faceless embodiments of the dreams of our times, we also meet a courageous — and doomed — woman . . . *H.S.S.*

Then she remembered just in time, and stopped short while still shielded by the projecting stone-trim framing the street-entrance. Cautiously, she extended just the tip of her nose and the width of one eye out beyond it for a moment's precautionary look beforehand out where she intended going.

There he was again, big as life, waiting a few yards down the sidewalk from her, shoulders leaning back up against the building-wall. She had an unappealing (to her, anyway) glimpse of a loose-fitting knee-short olive gabardine topcoat, of a yeast-pallid complexion with a cigarette stuck into it, like a thermometer taking its owner's temperature.

Every night now for—how long? More than a week, wasn't it? And maybe even longer, for most likely she hadn't noticed him right away from the start.

She'd had men hang around and follow her before—every girl does—but not like this. They'd close in after a short distance, a few yards, a block or two, tip their hats, make an opening remark—and promptly get brushed off good and solid. He didn't do anything like this: never came any closer, never spoke or tried to speak to her. And most significant, and most unsalubrious, of all, after one or two long, hard, almost-paralyzing stares on the earlier nights, now he pretended not to be looking at her at all. She could never catch his eyes, even though she knew they had been on her only a second before, making her own respond in automatic reflex. It was this part of it that was the scariest and creepiest part of the whole thing. Being stalked is one thing, but this turned it from an amatory into a jungle-kind of thing.

In other words, he didn't give her any chance to defend herself. How can you defend yourself when no offense has been committed—yet?

What did he want with her? What was it all about? Was he one of these screws, these oddballs, that get their kicks just looking at girls from a distance without going near them at all, and then go home and dream their dirty little dreams?

Whatever he was and whatever it was he was after, he kept gaining ground, encroaching on her more and more as night followed night, while still keeping the distance between them fixed and unbridged, as it was now. The first couple of nights, for example, she'd managed to dis-

engage herself from him at the crowded bus-stop where she took her bus, simply by waiting until the last possible moment before she jumped on, and thus leaving him stranded back there in the crowd. After that he knew which bus she took, so it wouldn't work any more. Then she shook him off by a reverse twist, maneuvering so that she succeeded in keeping him *on* the bus while she bolted off it without warning at her rightful getting-off place, and he was sent riding on foolishly past her to a destination that hadn't even been his in the first place. But it was a hard thing to do, and now he knew her right departure-point this wouldn't work a second time either. From there on it, it was a case of following her along the street at a carefully held-back distance, just enough to keep her in sight the whole time, and seeing which house she went in. She knew he was back there somewhere every step of the way, even though she couldn't see him at all times. All that remained now was for him to come up openly to the door and try to get into the house after her. And the moment he did that, the tables swung all the way around and the law was suddenly over on her side.

But for tonight at least the problem remained, there before her, a few yards away.

She had to get the bus to go home down that way, past him. If she turned and went up the other way, she stood a good chance of slipping away unnoticed, he might not recognize her from the back. But this meant walking around all four sides of a very long block, in order to get back to where the bus-stop was. And after a hard day, on her feet most of the time since early that morning, she couldn't face the thought. A better idea suddenly occurred to her. She turned and went back in again, almost as quickly as she had come out just now. She had to fight her way upstream against the surging tide of girls who were now pouring out the front entrance.

"F o r g e t something, Leone?" a passing voice asked.

She didn't bother to answer.

She accosted the lift-boy whom she'd passed a moment ago on her way out. "Emile, are you finished with that newspaper you have stuck in your back-pocket?"

"Not quite," he said reluctantly. "I don't get much chance—"

She reached out and pulled it away from him anyway.

"Don't be so stingy. I've shared parts of my lunch with you often enough, haven't I?"

"All right, keep it," he consented grudgingly. "Since when are you getting so studious? Next thing, you'll be reading a book."

She went back to the outer edge of the doorway again, keeping herself in just far enough out of sight of the waiter staked-out out there. She folded the paper over three times, so that it had bulk enough to stand upright by itself without sagging over at the top. Then she raised it to the approximate level of her face, covering the side of it that would have to pass closest to him, and held it that way with one hand. As if she was reading with her head turned aside to the paper, while she was walking along. It looked a little grotesque, but not to the point of conspicuousness.

She looked behind her and waited until a group of three had come out together, all going the same way obviously because they had their arms linked in comradely relaxation after the long hard working-day. She attached herself to them with a long swing around to their outermost side, and the four of them passed him abreast. Looking under the bottom of the newspaper, she could see his shoes standing there up against the building.

Curious, how you could read shoes, what they could tell you. She had never thought of this before. And in this particular instance, it was a shivery kind of lore. Shoes could indicate a whole bodily movement, could even indicate thoughts, even though you couldn't see any of the rest of the person, from the insteps up.

Black shoes, these were. Not expensive, plenty run-down. They'd been around a lot, today and every day. They had a patina of dust all over them. The hubs had a line of perforations running around them and in the center a design like a musical clef-sign, she wasn't sure what it was called.

One was flat on the ground toe-to-heel, the way any shoe usually is. The other, crossed over in front of the first, was balanced on its toe, the heel lifted clear. The fixed waiting position, waiting for her to show up, waiting for her to pass by. And as she did so, it went back to where it belonged, on the opposite side of its mate, and flattened out. The readying position: he sees someone. Is it me? Sure. Who else would it be? Now she was past. Looking back-

ward, but still from under the newspaper's bottom, the hubs of both had swivelled, pointing themselves after her. The alerted, about-to-start-out position.

It hadn't worked. She hadn't really expected it to. It was just, she hadn't known what else to do, what other way to try to cover up.

Oh God, she thought with a sickish sinking sensation in her stomach, do I have to have *that* all over again now for the rest of the evening, until I can pull my flat street-door closed after me?

She couldn't look back any more, not without turning her whole head around, which would have given her away (she was already given away, to him anyway: he had singled her out, he had isolated her from the rest of the crowd; what she didn't want to give away was the fact that she was on to this, knew that he had spotted her; she wanted to hang onto this one last flimsy buffer for whatever slight advantage there might possibly be in it). She didn't have to look back anyway, to know that if he hadn't already started on the prowl after her, he was going to from one minute to the next.

I may live a long time, I may live only a short one, she told herself with a bitter inward shudder, but somehow I'll never again be able to look at a pair of men's shoes and not have a little bit of recollection of tonight come back to me.

At the corner she diverged from the other three. They kept going straight ahead, and she turned aside and went over to where the bus-stop was, just a little past the intersection. It was packed, this was the time for it to be that, and she wedged herself into the bee-swarm of people standing there all clustered together. Then later-comers, who kept coming every moment, closed her in and soon she was in the very core of the mass. You couldn't see anyone's shoes, there wasn't spread enough above to look down.

The first one wasn't hers, and then the next one was. She debated whether to hang back and let it go by. But this wouldn't fool him, he'd already been on it with her, he'd only hang back himself and let it go by. And of the two evils, she didn't want to be left there with him in a smaller crowd, or in no crowd at all. Which would soon happen if she let too many go by.

It was so packed you couldn't get inside it any more, but she managed to get

onto the round back-apron, which was left open except for a guard-rail, so that people actually bulged out over its sides. She put her newspaper up alongside her face again, this time with a weary, disheartened gesture, as if to say, what good is this doing me? Her head inclined a little, as part of the same mood.

Alongside her were a pair of snub-toed mouse-colored pumps. And over right next to them—hubs with a design like a musical clef-sign. Like a handwritten capital S with a slanting line through it.

The stops came and the stops went past, and they all quivered and jittered a little in unison, like in a toned-down version of that dance that once was called "the twist." Electricity turned the sidewalks into a dazzling beach, so that even the particles of sand mixed into the cement glittered like spilled sugar. Red, blue, green, white neons warred and clashed in a long perspective that finally ended with a blurred, flashing, s p i n n i n g Catherine-wheel-effect as its focal point. Inside lighted show-windows wax figures engaged in Leone's own profession, that of modeling clothes, stared down their noses haughtily at the real people going by. Most of the show-windows were oblongs, but a few were ovals with the excess space left-over outside their frames blacked-out, as if you were looking into a magnified peephole. Then as they left the more affluent section of the city behind and gradually worked their way into a lower-income district, these status-symbols became fewer and finally disappeared altogether. A movie-theater marquee blazed up like a real, live fire licking up the walls in back of it, proclaimed GIGI for an instant, and then was gone again as suddenly as it had appeared.

A teen-ager on a bicycle caught hold of something on the back end of the bus, lifted both legs to a near-horizontal position, and let it do her work for her and tow her along, blonde pigtailed hair slapping up and down behind her. The man sitting beside the nearest window to her turned his head her way and cautioned her with a typical middle-aged mildness. She gave a wild yell of derision for an answer, let go, and began to pedal madly and to actually outpace the bus and pull ahead of it. It was starting to slow for a stop ahead, anyway.

People had to get off, and this dispersed the pattern of the feet arranged around Le-

one as they pushed their way through and past them. Then when it had re-formed itself again, she saw that he had taken advantage of the wider amount of space now offered to move—not closer to her still, but further away, all the way over beside the opposite platform-railing. He was holding onto one of the upright stanchions and staring studiedly out and away from her on that side of the bus. All she could see was the back of one ear-rim and the nape of his neck. And a very thin sliver of profile, thin as the peel of an onion.

This was his technique for throwing her off-guard, for trying to keep her from noticing him, for seeming not to be doing the very thing he was doing. And it was a poor, pitifully poor technique indeed, she said to herself scornfully. What kind of a fool did he take her for, to expect her not to be aware of him, when he was always somewhere in the background, wherever she went, whichever way she turned. He must be a dope, among all the other things he was. But in this kind of a situation, she reminded herself apprehensively, dopes can be a real danger, rather than not.

He had the inevitable cigarette fixed in his mouth, that he never seemed without, as though it were a part of it, like a malformed tooth projecting. Smoking wasn't permitted, even on the open, back parts of the buses, and for a moment she wondered half-hopefully if this mightn't be a means of having him thrown off. Then she saw that it wasn't burning, it was dry, and the conductor noticed it too at the same time. She could tell that by the way he craned his neck out a little, to get a look around to the front of the offender's face, then went back to his own affairs again without saying anything. But what it indicated was an implicit breaking of rules and disregard for restraints, an outlaw-type of attitude. And that, too wasn't a good factor to have involved in a situation like this.

Her face was white and stony-hard with a mixture of fear and hostility, the fear of the pursued, the hostility of the put-upon, that marred and muddied all its usual good-looks. Her nerves were being drawn more taut all the time. Each evening she felt less confidence than the evening before, felt more of a desire for no reason at all to run and hide away. At times she could feel approaching

panic lapping over her feet like a cold slowly-rising tide that had to be held back, fought down. One of these times, if it kept up too much longer, control would burst and she would s u d d e n l y scream out in the middle of everyone and everything and go all to pieces.

And so the bus swept along, like a majestic ocean-liner, scattering the shoals of taxis and lesser cars before it as though they were tugs, while he looked out on his side at the buildings streaming endlessly by, and she looked down on her side at the platform-floor and brooded, eyes intent and furtive.

Her stop was coming up, there were only fixed stops on the buses, not improvised bell-signalled ones like in some other large cities, and the usual cat and mouse play was about to begin. Each one waiting to see the other move first. He didn't turn his head around, she didn't lift hers up from looking at the floor, and yet there was an electrical current of awareness going back and forth between them that almost prickled the skin and made stray hairs stand up singly.

She could feel the bus come to a stop under her feet with a soft slurring sensation and then a final shudder, and she heard the conductor call out the name of the stop.

She didn't move a muscle, didn't blink an eye. The shoes with the clef-signs were inert over there too.

It was no use trying to pin him onto the bus by waiting to the last minute and then jumping for it. He could do that far easier than she could, with her stiletto-heels. She might fall and turn her ankle or something.

She suddenly came to life and gave herself a push away from the railing by main force, almost like a violent fling around the other way, like when you cannot tear yourself away from something, have to exert every ounce of will-power to do so. And sprang down to the ground just as the bus got started once more.

She didn't have to turn around to see if he had followed her off; she knew he had. She knew what he was doing now, because he had done it each time before. He would stand there at first, kill time there, so that she could get far enough up the street, put enough distance between them, to make his coming after her less conspicuous. In other words, so that he wouldn't be treading right at her heels. Her street was straight and sloped slightly

upward, so that it was perfect for his purpose: he could keep her in sight without any difficulty from a distance of a whole block behind her.

His ways of marking time until she had gained enough of a lead were various. She had seen him do each one in turn, so she knew what they were. One was to gaze steadfastly in the direction in which the bus had gone, as if he intended walking along that way himself. Only he never did. Another was to actually start out in the reverse direction from her, going down the other way. Only to turn and retrace his steps once she was far enough off. One time he had gone behind a kiosk with a circular outer shell papered with colored three-sheets that stood on the twin corner to the bus-stop. From below the protective outer-rim, she could see his shoes standing there motionless, as she made her way up the sidewalk on the other side of the street. But they were pointed the opposite way. They were pointed outward. That told her it was a sham, in itself.

At the head of the second block to her flat—there were only two between it and the bus-stop—there was a neighborhood place where she always stopped in to eat when she came home from work. It couldn't be dignified by being called a restaurant, although it did have three or four little round white pedestal tables ranged along one wall. But these were mainly for reading your paper over a beer, or playing checkers, or honking your concertina for a quiet evening's relaxation. Everybody sat at the counter. It was run by a husband-and-wife team; she did the cooking, and he did the carrying and setting-out. The prices were sensible, for people who didn't have money to throw around.

Leone always sat on the third stool from where you came in. For no reason, just one of those little human habits that soon become fixed and firm. It became known as "Leone's stool." If it was taken when she came in, and she had to sit somewhere else, as soon as it was vacant she would move herself and her food back over to it again.

I shouldn't have to put up with it, she kept telling herself while she sat there waiting for her order to be prepared. But if she went up to a policeman and complained, That man keeps following me everywhere I go, she knew what the outcome would be. Has he come up to you and spoken to you? No. Has he

stopped you in any way? No. And even if he were halted and questioned, she knew what the answer there would be, after he gave his side of it. He has a right to take the same bus you do. The buses are free for anyone to ride on. He has a right to walk along the same street you do. The streets are free for anyone to walk on. And the policeman would stroll off with a rebuking shake of his head.

If he would only *do* something, that I could get my teeth into! she whimpered inwardly. But he was just like a shadow. And like a shadow, he left no mark.

When she had eaten, she opened her handbag to pay for the inexpensive little meal, which had been fish, because it was a Friday. (She didn't claim to be a *good* Catholic, but she did claim to *try* to be one as far as possible, without going overboard.) What was left-over in the bottle, of the wine that had come with it, he put away for her for the next night. She wasn't a drinker.

While she was waiting for her change to come back, she held the top flap of her handbag propped up and looked at her face in the mirror which was pasted to the underside of the flap. It was more a reflex of habit than a conscious act, an inattentive idle manipulation without any real meaning. And then suddenly she l o o k e d more closely, a second time. For, in the mirror, she saw not one face but two. Her own and—her persecutor's. Hers was in the foreground, enlarged, so that just a cross-section of one eye and cheek showed. His was in the background, a small-scale, peering in through the eating-place window. Yellow in the face of the light and shaped like an inverted pear. Or like a child's toy balloon beginning to sag because of losing some of its air. She couldn't see any of the rest of him, his face seemed to hang there disembodied against the night, to one side of the reversed letters E F A. Perhaps this was because he was bending over sideward to look in, and the rest of his body was offside to the plate-glass. It made him look like an apparition, a hallucination. Then suddenly, as he sensed that he had caught her eye, his face vanished.

She drew a deep breath of helpless frustration. E v e r y move she made, watched. Every mouthful she swallowed. And she couldn't fight back, shake him off, there was no way. "He has a right to glance into a restaurant-win-

dow as he's passing by outside, anyone does," they would say.

He had a right to go here, he had a right to go there, he had a right to do this, he had a right to do that. He had a right to do everything, it seemed. But he didn't have a right to make her life miserable like this and put such fear into her like he was doing now!

She banged her empty coffee-cup down into its saucer so angrily that the owner of the place heard the sound and came over to her.

"What's the matter, coffee no good?" he queried solicitously. She was a good, steady, nearly-everynight customer, and he didn't want her to be displeased.

"It's not the coffee that's the matter, it's something else that's the matter," she answered gloomily. "I was just thinking to myself, that's all."

He shrugged and spread his hands out, much as to say: Well, we each have a right to our own problems, after all.

She got up and went over to the door, and looked around from there, before stepping outside. Gone. There was no sign of him. Or more likely he was covered up in some doorway, and she couldn't distinguish him from here.

There was very little distance left to cover now, but she liked this last lap least of all. On the bus, there were people. In the eating-place, there was the proprietor. But the street was not an overly-populous one, and this last had to be made all by herself, strictly on her own.

She almost ran the final few yards until she got safely to her own door. She blew a breath of relief. "Made it once more," was the thought in her mind. And the inevitable corrolary to it was, But some night I won't. The pitcher goes to the well once too often.

One foot safely within the open door, she leaned back far enough to turn her head and scan the street, down along the way she had just come from. Nothing, no one. But in a black door-embrasure a few houses down she thought she saw a wavy line that ran up and down one side of it, instead of being clear-cut and straight-edged like the other side was. That must be him, right there. She didn't hang back to investigate. The door closed after her, and the street kept what it knew to itself.

Winded from the long climb, it was a walk-up of course, she let herself into her own individual flat, and went over to the window to investi-

gate before putting on the lights. She'd been doing this for the last few nights, now. She didn't need the lights to guide her, she knew the place so well, where everything was and how to go around it to avoid it.

The one thing he still might not know was which floor she was on and which window was hers, and she wanted to keep that final protective margin of error for as long as she could.

She went over to the side of the curtain and l o o k e d through from there, instead of dividing it in the middle, which might have been noticeable from the street.

She could see him down there, standing still down there. The olive topcoat stood out palely against the dinginess of the night. He wasn't moving. Only one thing moved about him, and that moved while remaining in a still position. That is to say, it pulsed or throbbed; it glowed and dimmed and glowed again. It had a beat to it. The little ember-dab at the end of his immovable cigarette. T h e r e was something freezing and horrid about the way that nothing moved about him but that. It had in it a suggestion of leashed ferocity. Of hot-breathing, crouched batedness. Of a mauler snuffing and scenting its prey-to-be.

She put her hands up to the sides of her head and pressed them hard. She told herself: I'm walled-in here. If only there were another way out of here, a back way, a side way, any way at all. I'd like to run and run, and never stop. To the ends of the night. To the ends of the earth.

Then she said to herself: stop thinking things like that. This is your place. You belong in it. Nobody has the right to drive you out of it. He can't come in here. He can't come any nearer than he is now.

She bunched a fist and pounded it down against the top of a chair-back in helpless remonstrance. Why couldn't it have been any of the other girls I work with? Why did it just have to be me? That's not a very charitable thought, I know, but being in a fix like this doesn't give you time to be very charitable.

That's not love, down there. It can't be. Love sends you different kinds of messages. Love begins with talking first, with smiling. Love turns its face toward you, soft and shining, not hides it away from you. Love wants you to know it, not skulks in doorways in the dark.

It's not just ordinary everyday sex either. *That* sends

you different kinds of messages too. Blunt maybe, but honest and open in their crude way. A hard meaningful body-stare. A look that asks you, How about it? You willing? A jostling in the crowd. A brushing of the elbows, a nudging of the foot. Maybe an opening remark in a slurred undertone for no one else to catch.

No, this isn't that either. This is something clammier than that.

He's sick inside his head. What else could he be but that? Some kind of a maniac. And if people like that once ever get their hands on you — She winced with superstitious horror.

After some time had passed she finally closed the door, which she had left slightly ajar so that its slender wand of outside hall-light would somewhat alleviate the total darkness of the room, and put on the lights. Enough of a time-lapse had now occurred for him not to necessarily connect her entry into the building with the going-on of the lights behind these particular windows. Or so she felt. And the dark held its own nervous terrors, anyway.

She had a little radio there, not much of a thing, but at least it worked. It coughed a lot, and it spit when you turned on any nearby light-switch, but at least it banished the silence of aloneness. In a croupy, asthmatic, but better-than-nothing way.

She thought maybe a little soft music would take the edge off her nerves, she liked Viennese waltzes in particular, but a news-break was winding-up just as she turned it on.

". . . meanwhile the war continues, no immediate end to it in sight.

"Back here at home, the second of three men who broke out of the penitentiary at (cra-a-ack, cra-a-ack, *cra-a-ack*), the so-called escape-proof jail, almost ten days ago has now been recaptured. His condition is serious from a gunshot wound suffered at the time of the break-out, during which two g u a r d s were also wounded. The third man, who is still at large, is considered especially dangerous, as he is believed to be armed. An all-out alert has been sounded. . .

"The weather for the metropolitan area for tonight and tomorrow promises to be fair and . . ."

Her eyes had started to widen even before she reached out to the knob and closed it off. Her fingers remained on the knob long after the sound had died, while without real-

izing it she turned her head slowly toward the window and stared at it, her eyes now following the direction her thoughts had already taken swift minutes ago.

She took her hand away from the radio at last and started to go over toward the window. And without knowing it she was holding one hand clasped around her own throat, in the immemorial gesture of feminine fear and trepidation.

It couldn't be. There could be no connection. The one thing had nothing to do with the other. How could a runaway, a wanted man, to whom every moment counted, for whom cover-up was essential, how would he have the nerve to hang around a bus-stop night after night in full view of dozens of people, then ride the crowded bus with any number of faces pressed close to his?

And yet, who knows? A man in prison for any length of time becomes sex-starved, which is the same thing as insanity, if only temporarily. She happened to cross his path, his eyes fastened themselves on her and couldn't let go, his thoughts fastened themselves on her and wouldn't let go. And the rest of the sequence followed from there on in natural order. He started to follow her around. Since the sex-drive is stronger than thirst and stronger than hunger, perhaps, at least in his case, it was stronger also than his fear of being recognized, being recaptured, and being taken back to jail. A man in his condition has no sense of precaution, he loses it, it is blotted out, inevitably.

But all this was no solace. This was an explanation only but not a solution.

She had the edge of the curtain back a little now, and was looking down into the street.

He wasn't there, he'd gone, he'd moved on. Maybe he was still watching her from someplace else where she couldn't see him now, but there was no sign of him where he'd been before. The street was empty, and showed up in two shades of gray: a silvery-gray where the street-light washed over it in a wide ellipse that climbed partly up the walls of the nearer buildings, and a dark pewter-gray elsewhere. Then a taxi vibrated through it, making looming yellow moons that went out again after it had passed, but that was another matter.

No, he wasn't down there any longer. It was over for tonight. She phrased a little

prayer to her guardian star, her destiny, her luck, whatever it was. Someone, something: "Oh, don't let it happen again tomorrow night. I can't stand any more of it. I'm ready to— *Please,* not tomorrow night. No more . . . No more . . ."

She started to cry. She hadn't cried since she was a little girl. Twelve, eleven maybe. Or if she had, not like this, not ever like this before. All of a week's accumulated and compounded terror started to pour out of her, like when a sluice-gate is suddenly pulled open, in gushes that ran down her cheeks, and when her hands went up as if to stem them, in trickles that still crept through the crevices between her fingers, while her body writhed and twisted with her own sobs and suppressed, stuttering breaths, her head supine on the seat of a chair and her legs drawn out on the floor.

And with that, as if in direct and vengeful rejection of her prayer, as if her pleas had cabalistically produced the very thing she wanted to avert, came the stealthy indicating-signal of s o m e o n e there outside the door. It wasn't a knock, or even a tap; it was like s o m e o n e stroking the door with the nails of two fingers, trying to make as little sound as possible and yet attract her attention.

"Are you in there?" a hushed voice wanted to know, mouth pressed up close against the door-seam.

She jumped erect so swiftly that the whole thing was like a coil shooting free; one single motion and she was up and straight and quivering like the feelers of an insect caught under somebody's palm.

She d i d n ' t answer, she couldn't have, but maybe the stunned silence betrayed her. Such things can happen. There is a silence that vibrates, that speaks, that tells things.

It came again, the rasp, about like a match flicking sandpaper. And then a hiss to punctuate it, to attract.

"Sst. Are you in there?"

She went over by it, on hushed tipped feet and stood there close to it, face lowered intently, her balance in flux but afraid to touch it for support even from the inside.

Then it breathed a name, the door, it spoke a name.

"Gerard."

And suddenly no door had ever opened so fast. Suddenly there *was* no door any more. Just two in love, trying to make themselves one. Suddenly all the world was heaven, noon-bright, and there was no

such thing as fear, even its very definition had faded away from the language-books and left just a blank space where it once had been.

She didn't even wait to see if it was he. There was no time to look at him, scan his face. It didn't matter, her heart knew. Her arms went around him like the back-fling of a cracked whip. Her head was on his shoulder, her face was beside his face, and all she saw was blank wall opposite, but her heart knew him just the same.

His voice was low and cautioning in her ear, and a slight move his head made told her he had looked over his shoulder guardedly. "Not out here. Hurry up, let me get inside first!"

She reclosed the door after them. He went over to a chair, fixed the top of it with his hand first as if afraid it would get away from him, and then sank into it loose as a puddle of water. She thought she never had seen such exhaustion before. It was a collapse.

She couldn't take her eyes off him. She moved first to one side of him, then to the other, then directly before him, slightly crouched, her hands to her knees. "I can't believe it, I can't, I can't! When did you get out?"

He raised his head, which had sunk low almost to his chest with weariness, and looked at her. "I didn't. I broke out."

She gave a quick head-turn across the room, then back again. "God in heaven! You're one of those three, on that broadcast I heard—? I never dreamed— They didn't give any names."

"They never do," he said dully. "We're just people without names. That's so anyone on the outside who might know us, want to help us or hide us, won't hear about it."

"I didn't even know where they'd sent you."

"I didn't want you mixed up in it at all. Did you get that note I smuggled out to you, after I was picked up and being held for trial?"

"A woman I didn't know sat down next to me one night, at that little place I eat down the street. She folded her arms on the counter, and with the outside one slipped it to me underneath the one that was next to me. Then she got up and walked out without a word."

"That was Malin's wife," he said without emotion. "He was the one killed a week ago Monday. Three little kids."

"It wasn't in your handwriting, but I knew it must be—"

"He passed her the message on from me, and had her write it down."

"I can still remember every word of it by heart," she said devoutly, like when you recite your rosary. "*'Stay out of it. Keep away from the trial. And if I'm sent up don't come down and try to say goodbye to me before I go. If they q u e s t i o n you, you don't know me.*"

"I kept it for two whole days, and then I did away with it," she said tenderly, as if she were speaking of a love-poem.

"That was the thing to do," he approved.

Outside in the hall before, without looking at him at all, she had known him. Now, inside *and* looking at him, she almost *didn't* know him any more. The terrible changes the thing had brought to him. The dust of the wayside and the soot of the box-car that were no longer just surface grime any more but gave the appearance of having gotten under his skin and made him look permanently dingy. The deep sweat-etched lines of intolerable strain and tiredness that would never quite go away again. The hunger of the in-drawn cheeks and the out-starting eyes.

He'd been so young once and been so spruce and eye-pleasing. He wasn't now. And strange is the way of the heart: she loved him now more than she ever had then.

She saw him dipping two fingers into the patch-pocket of the caked, bedraggled blue denim shirt he had on, trying to locate a cigarette. All he could find was a charred butt, put out short to save for the next time.

"Wait," she said, and got hold of a box of them she had in the place there, took one out and lit it for him. Then she passed it to him from her own mouth.

"You didn't used to smoke," he remembered.

"I still don't, much. I've had these, I don't know how long. One of the girls at the place gave them to me once, in a fit of generosity. They weren't her brand, or something."

He took the cigarette out of his mouth and looked it over, and it seemed to suggest some other train of thought to him.

"You haven't been going with anybody while I've been away?"

She looked him quietly and simply in the eye. "*Is* there anybody but you—to go with? I didn't know, you'll have to tell me."

She thought of that man on the street and on the bus—and he already seemed so long ago and half-forgotten, l i k e

something in a last week's dream—and she decided not to tell him about it. Men were a little peculiar about some things, even the best of them, you had to understand that. He might think, even if he didn't come out with it, that she must have given him some slight encouragement in the very beginning to trigger the thing off like that, and she didn't want him to. It was all over now, anyway. She wasn't alone any more.

"How'd you get into the house here? Did *she* see you, downstairs?"

"I've been in it since early this afternoon. I came along intending to take just a quick look and see if I could figure out from down below whether you still lived up here or not. Then I saw this junk-cart standing out at the door, and two men were u n l o a d i n g somebody's furniture and taking it into the house—"

"That's the flat on the floor below," she explained. "The old lady there died last week, and it's been rented over."

"So on the spur of the moment, while they were inside, I picked up a chair from the sidewalk and went in after them. I walked right by her. She thought I was with them, I guess. Then when I got up to the floor they were on, I put it down outside the door while their backs were turned, and came on up here to your floor. I found a closet at the back of the hall for keeping rags and pails, and I crouched down inside it. She came to it once and tried to get the door open, but I held onto the inside of the knob with both hands, and she gave up finally and went away again mumbling something about getting a carpenter to come and plane it down.

"I knew if you still had your modelling-job, you wouldn't be back until much later. Then when the people started coming home from work, I had to try to translate their footsteps on the stairs. A man came up first. Then a woman; I knew it wasn't you, because I heard her call out to some kid on the inside, 'Open the door for me, I have my arms full of bundles.' Then I heard a young step, a girl's step, and it seemed to go in right about where your door was, so I waited a couple minutes more and then I took a chance and came out."

"When did you eat last?" she asked him.

"So long ago I can't remember," he said dully. "While I was still out in the open country, it was easier. Farm-women would give me handouts sometimes, if I was careful how I came up to them. But

once I'd worked my way into the city, that stopped. In the city they don't give you anything without money. And how could I stand still long enough to earn any? I snatched an orange, I think yesterday morning. I ate the skin and all."

She closed her eyes for a moment, appalled.

"I have to get these things off," he said, bending down to his ravaged shoes. "My feet are like hamburgers."

Then when she saw the stains of the old blood that was already black and the newer blood that was still rusty-colored, "Oh those *feet!*" she moaned in unnutterable compassion, clapping her hands together.

She got a basin of water and some cloths, and getting down on her knees before him gently tried to treat and soothe them. And when she had, wrapping a towel around one, held it up and pressed the side of her face against it.

"Cut it out," he said embarrassedly. "What am I, a baby?"

"I'll have to go to the pharmacy and get some kind of a salve."

She heated up and brought him coffee-and-milk, and some bread and other stuff that she always kept there for her own use in the mornings, and sat opposite him at the little pushed-over-to-the-wall table, watching him eat. Once she reached over and stroked back a tendril of hair that had come down before his eye.

"What are you going to do?" she murmured finally, low, as if afraid to hear the answer.

He blew out the match he was holding. "One thing I'm *not* going to do, is ever go back there again alive. For me, that's over."

"But how—?" The worry on her face finished it without words.

"All I need is a breathing-spell, one day or two, to rest up and clean myself up."

"You'll stay here with me," she said briefly, as if there were no sense in even discussing that part of it. "We'll manage it somehow. But then—?"

"I know a guy who'll fix me up some fake papers. With them, I can get some job on a ship, outbound. Jump it at the other end, and start all over again clean. It doesn't matter where. Then as soon as I get my bearings, you—you'll come, won't you?"

"*Any*where," she said fiercely. "The minute you say the word."

"It's asking a lot," he admitted, as if telling it to him-

self.

"What is a lot?" she said. "And what is a little? There are no measurements when you—care. It is all one; one-size."

He sat staring into the distance, hunched over his own lap, hands folded-together across his knees. She wondered what he saw there—their future?

After awhile she told him about it. This was the time to, to make them more one. When he needed somebody to be close the most.

"I'm going to have your baby. Our baby."

"You fool," was what he said to that at first. "You could have gotten out of that. You've been around." And then he took the hardness out of the words by putting the flat of his hand on top of her head and rumpling her hair in a rough-neck and yet an almost tender sort of way, and scraped his knuckle past her chin.

"I didn't want to," she said softly. And left the "get out of it" part unsaid.

He was testing it in his mind. "A guy likes a kid of his own. To show that he passed through this world at least once. Imagine, *me*. Me of all people. A kid of my own. How the old crowd would laugh. Lejeune, that was too fast for any cop. And too slick for any woman. Well, the cops got me first. And a woman's got me now."

He looked grimly up at her from under his thick black lashes, which were the only thing left of his old looks. "You take good care of it, hear? You watch over it careful. If anything happens to it, I'll break your loving jaw."

She framed his face with her hands and kissed him, laughing but with a softness in her eyes that was more than just the light in the room shining back from them.

"You haven't even got it yet, and you're already growling like an old, experienced father."

When she put out the light, they lay close to one another for awhile, quiet and happy just to be together. Then in the darkness, his soft murmur sounded in her ear.

"Let's make doubly s u r e, shall we?"

Tomorrow was the big opening, the most trying day of the year for a fashion-house mannequin. Like an opening-night is for an actress. She had to be there early, she had to be on her toes. And she'd been rehearsing all day, today just past. But—he was Gerard, her Gerard and nobody else's.

"Let's," she whispered back

to him in the dark.

Later, he was asleep but she was still awake, thinking about them and what their chances were. Something from the radio broadcast came back to her: "This man is believed to be armed." And then something that he had said himself. "I'm never going back there again alive." She wondered if he really had a gun on him or not. She hadn't thought about it the whole time until now. Now that she recalled, she hadn't been able to see one anywhere on him. But if he did have one on him, it might cost him his life. Men were so quick about using things like that, and he in particular was so hot-headed, she knew that well.

He was sleeping with his shirt on, turned toward her, lying on his side. She reached out carefully and felt his shoulder, the uppermost one, through the wide-spread gap of his shirt-front. There were several bands of tape spliced around it and going through his armpit. She reached around to the back, to his shoulder-blade, and the gun was there, bedded in some kind of a makeshift holster. She couldn't tell what it was (canvas perhaps or gunny-sack-fibre, hurriedly put-together along the way) except that it held it there, so that he could swing his opposite arm up overshoulder and pull it out with one swift move.

She started to ease it slyly out, a milimeter at a time. There was nothing to impede it, the impromptu holder or sac had no top to it, there was no lid to snap up as a leather one would have had. Then when it was halfway out, she stopped and began going over the possible consequences of what she was about to do.

No, it wasn't fair to do this, disarm him in his sleep this way like a thief in the night, leave him vulnerable to his enemy. It wasn't fair; he had to have his chance to defend himself. Right or wrong, she wouldn't be the one to do this to him. If their positions had been reversed, she couldn't see him doing this to her, she knew his attitudes too well.

She let the gun slide back in again, and he went on sleeping, never knowing.

In the morning she dressed swiftly and quietly, and left him there still sleeping in the pale-blue early-morning light, his face looking like a pale-blue terra cotta, with a little scribble alongside the bed for him to find in case he awoke.

"I've only gone down the street a minute to get some foodstuffs. If you hear

someone at the door, don't jump at them, it's only me.
L."

On her way back inside, burdened with bags and bundles like an overladen coolie, she ran into the fat woman who was in charge of the house.

The latter grinned with a weazened monkey-like expression as she saw her go by. "It pays to buy in large quantities like that, it's more economical," she observed. "You almost have enough there for two people."

Leone halted and whirled around to face her. "Have I?" she challenged.

"One shouldn't be alone too much," the woman went on.

Now what does that mean? Leone wondered, beginning to tighten-up inside. She said, "If you mean me, haven't I always been? What about it?"

"After awhile you—you know, you start talking to yourself."

She overheard us, last night, Leone told herself, with a cold stricken sensation taking hold of her around the heart. "What do *you* do, come up and listen outside my door?" she flared up angrily. "Well, the next time, let me know what I say to myself! I want to know how good I s o u n d!" And she swung around and continued on up the stairs, but with a chipper indifference she was far from feeling.

He was still asleep, he'd never even heard her leave. She put her things down, and then went over to where he was lying and stood looking at him for a moment. One of those gravely-sweet, inscrutable looks that love can give at times. Then she bent over and kissed him, soft as a petal dropping, on the forhead.

His lids flickered and started to go up several times, then lost their battle and settled down once more. But a spark of consciousness had been ignited that was slower in dying down again. He went "Mm," and his head stirred a little, and she knew that he could understand her, even though he seemed not to. Or he would remember what she had said when he fully woke up.

"Listen, I have to go now. I'll be late getting back, this is our big day. Are you listening? When you get up, lock the door on the inside. I'm going to try to fix it with the old woman downstairs, to keep her from coming up here, if I can. And keep away from the windows, don't go near them and try to look out. There are some cigarettes in there, I put them where you

can find them, and everything else you need. I brought you in a couple of magazines, too, to help pass the time with. On my way home I'll try to stop off and buy you a clean shirt and underwear, if I can find a place that's still open. Now rest, rest all you can. I only hope God keeps His eye on you for me."

She bent and kissed him twice more, this time once on each cheek.

From the open door she looked back. His arm, which had been too near the edge of the bed, over-balanced and fell loosely down and dangled there limply over-edge.

She went back a moment, lifted it, and put it back under the cover. Then she tucked it a little to hold it.

Then she went out and closed the door behind her. At the head of the stairs, before s t a r t i n g down, she opened her handbag and took out some money. About all she had, all she could afford, leaving just a little over for the bus and to buy him a shirt. She folded it tactfully out of sight under her palm and went down the stairs.

"Here," she said going over to the fat woman, and held out her hand.

"What's this for?" the fat woman said, looking at it. "You're all paid up until the first."

Leone said off-handedly: "You don't need to go up to my place to look after anything today. In fact I wish you wouldn't. It'll hold. Some other time. I'll let you know."

The superintendant pinned her with a look that was undecided between being shrewd and sympathetic.

Leone suddenly threw discretion aside. It seemed the only thing to do. "Look, you're a woman. There's a time in life when—well, s o m e o n e means a lot to you. You had the time come to you once too, yourself. Try to remember it now and—make an allowance, will you?"

This u n k e m p t, heavily-fleshed hostile, with a shadowed upper lip and a mole on one cheek, who could be so shrill about disturbing noises and so steely about an overdue rent, showed a surprising streak of empathy that Leone hadn't known she'd even had in her until now.

"We're all sisters, all of us," she said. She prodded money back down into the slashed h a n d-p o c k e t of Leone's raincoat. "All in one big family." She chopped the edge of her hand reassuringly against Leone's upper arm.

As she went on out to the street Leone knew, at least, that she had her on her side.

When she got to the job, Leone raced up the stairs to the dressing-rooms as though she were pursued by devils. Those same stairs she had come bounding down so buoyantly at seven the night before. So much had happened to her in-between, her whole life had been altered. Here too, the place had changed almost beyond recognition from its workaday look. The huge alabaster vase at the back of the ground-floor corridor was filled with fat, puffy chrysanthemums in deftly-blended tones of orange, rust and copper. The glass doors leading into the display-room stood wide open, with a uniformed attendant stationed outside to collect invitations, and a discordant buzz of voices coming from inside, punctuated intermittently by the chirpy, twittering sounds of a small stringed orchestra tuning up. On the stairs and in the lower hall, there was a long roll of blue-velour carpeting that began on the floor above and stretched like a rivulet of escaping fountain-pen ink right down to the front door-sill. It stopped there so a b r u p t l y you almost expected it to continue out into the street beyond, but it didn't.

There was no one in sight at the moment who could clock her lateness, only the impudent lift-boy, at Prussian-stiff attention before his cage and not at all impudent today. On the stairs she narrowly missed running head-on into a butler or caterer of some sort carrying a hamper of champagne-bottles, who was coming down them just as she hurled herself up. An agile swerve, and the collision was averted.

Everybody was already in the dressing-room and in their places when she came hustling in. The "daytime-wear" group were all dressed already and ready to parade on out. Leone's own group, the "evening-wear" group. were all undressed already and having their faces made-up by a man in shirt-sleeves with a portable kit on his lap, untroubled by all the nudity about him. Renard did nothing by halves. He had it all jotted down on a chart with which she had supplied him; each triangular combination of mannequin's complexion, color of gown, and make-up required to go with them, had been worked out days before.

Paradoxically though, while he gave each face that came before him the expert touch it needed and passed it on improved, a bluish growth showed on the lower part of his own, hairs sprouted at right-angles out from his eye-

brows and from the pits of his ears, and the creases ridging his forehead were emphasized by grime that looked as if soap had not disturbed it for weeks. But then he wasn't to go on public view, in one of the greatest selling competitions in the world.

One arm recurrently out to the wall to help her keep her balance in the jostling crowd around her, Leone stripped, literally down to the skin—for a Paris original always carries along its own indicated foundations—stuffed her personal things into her locker, pinned a towel around her waist, for the sake of comfort on the hard-surfaced wooden bench if not modesty, and sat down to wait her turn, elbow resting on the mirror-shelf in back of her and head propped in her upraised hand.

When the make-up man had finished work on her, he brushed off some excess powder that had fallen over her breasts with a completely impersonal swipe of the hand that set them dancing for a second or two.

A moment later the hairdresser took over, b e g a n switching her head this way and that as if her hair was taffy that he was pulling.

Suddenly the head of the establishment, Renard herself, stood behind her, studying her face and hair-do in the mirror before them both. Leone's that is. She nodded approval, gave an upward hitch with one finger. Leone stood up. A brassiere was brought, attached.

"She's too hefty," Renard complained. "This number calls for a moderate bosom, not a pair of ostrich-eggs like that. Tighten it up a little."

Leone's eyes crossed briefly and inadvertently as the already tourniquet-like constriction was r e d o u b l e d around her.

"Hold it in. Hold it in. *Breathe in!*" Renard said sternly, giving her a slap across it.

Leone went "iffffff" like the up-swing of a bicycle-pump handle.

Then finally, like the rains of April it was named for, the creation, the original, descended on her and drenched her in slanting streaks of bead-raindrops and fuming mists of silver-gray tissue. And the magic that Renard always wrought had come to pass. A bewildered, skinny, dead-for-sleep girl became a thing of mystic allure. Every man's dream of Woman, that dream he never overtakes. Every woman's dream of herself, that she never achieves.

Everyone's hand was on her. They backed away, they

closed in, they pulled, they pushed, they tucked, they tugged, they smoothed, they crimped. They could do nothing with it. It had been perfect to begin with.

Surrounded by a cluster of people still busily fussing at her, she was led out to the top of the stairs and poised there, as though they were about to throw her headlong down to the bottom.

The customary time-table, or pace, was that as one girl completed two entire circuits of the show-room, the next started down the stairs. They usually met and passed on the lower steps. This gave the briefest pause between numbers, just long enough for the viewers to adjust their minds for the new selection but not long enough to create an awkward delay or gap.

The go-ahead signal was given, and Leone took her first, baptismal step down, with the hypnotic, pavane-like slow-motion of the professional mannequin, feeling her way with the tip of her foot as though she were blindfolded.

There was an urgent, surreptitious follow-up footfall on the stairs behind her, someone thrust a catastrophically forgotten show-handkerchief into her hand, and then whoever it was retreated again into safe anonymity.

She and the other mannequin passed one another. They didn't look at each other, they weren't supposed to.

She reached the foot of the stairs, her course leveled-off, and the display-room was now hers alone.

There were some people standing out here, in the space between the stairs and the display-room entrance, all men, who either had shown up late and found all the seats taken, or who wanted to hold private discussions of their own out here, or whatever the reason was.

Those who had their backs to her, and some did, turned around to face her as she started to glide past them. All but one; he kept himself turned away from her. But the man he was standing in front of, looked at her hard and steadily. They all were doing that of course, but there was this difference: the rest were looking at the gown she was merchandising, *he* was looking at her face and only her face. Then the corner of his mouth moved a little, saying something secretive to the man with his back to her. And she saw the latter nod his head, she could see him do that from the back. And right after that, *he* turned too.

And they were looking at each other again, she and that face from the crowd, that was always there, wherever she went, each night now the whole week past. Outside the door here where she worked, and on the bus, and peering into the cafe, and under the windows of her flat.

She faltered in her stride, she couldn't help doing so, and gave a sagging little knee-dip for a moment, then picked up her swing again and went at a stylized stroll into the packed salon behind, but with a feeling as if there was a knife in back of her poised between her shoulder-blades.

She heard a voice introduce: "April Rain, for the important moments of your life," and thought, This is one of mine, but it isn't a good one.

All she was conscious of was tiers of pinkish-b e i g e ovals looking her over from all sides. Even when she felt secure and at ease, she never looked directly into their faces, she had been taught not to. It would have injected a personal note that would have been out of place; more to the point, it would have distracted attention from the very thing she was trying to draw attention to. And now, after seeing him standing out there, she wouldn't have dared look into their faces, it would have broken her up in no time. So she fixed her eyes on an imaginary guide-line along the walls just high enough to miss the tops of their heads, and kept them on it whichever way she turned. And all the while she kept thinking, I have to pass him a second time, on my way out, to get back to the stairs: oh, my God!

There were murmurs of admiration and interest as she moved around the room, which swelled now and then to a sustained buzz or a spattering of applause. Individual remarks stood out here and there. "*Very* good!" "A natural!" "She always comes up with something!"

In the meantime she kept trying not to swallow (which would have been noticeable along her throat-line), and her tongue felt as if it were drowning in her own fears.

Every now and then she had to make a complete turn-around, to show off the back of the gown as well. The whole routine or technique was a simple one, that could be picked up in fifteen minutes. She had. What your job depended on more than that was word-of-mouth reputation, of having been known to work at one of the other big houses previously. In oth-

er words, once you were in, you were in. *Until* you were in, you couldn't get in.

One corner was past, now the second. There remained only one more and then she would be back to the door, that dreaded door, again. And he was waiting out there beyond it. Whoever he was and whatever he was, one thing was sure, he wasn't good. He wasn't good news. Maybe if she—just went by fast, without stopping to think about it and without looking at him, he wouldn't have a chance to—do whatever it was he was going to do. And the other one with him, who was he? Birds of a feather? Maybe he was just some fellow-standee he'd struck up a conversation with. There was a certain freemasonry among men of that kind.

She was out through the door now and about to break into a headlong spurt. And then she suddenly had to slow it down again. Renard was standing there, come to drink in her own triumph. People all around her showering congratulations, but her eye didn't miss a trick. Her behind-the-hand whisper reached Leone as she was about to go past her. "Don't hurry so. You may catch that on something and damage it."

The voice of authority, that could not be disregarded. She tapered to a gracious walk, and one of the two men immediately made a signal to her. Not *him*. The other one.

She didn't stop for it, so they came over to her instead, stood alongside her one on each side, peering closely with professional interest and professional pitilessness. *Not* at the gown this time, but at her. Only at her. She halted, with fear-glazing eyes.

"Your name Leone Aubry?" said one, pointing with a slim putty-green cigar he was holding between his fingers.

"What do you want?"

"*Is* your name Leone Aubry?"

"*Yes*, but what do you want?"

"You're coming with us, is what we want."

Then he showed her something, in a sort of wallet-carrying-case that split open across the top and uplidded, instead of opening along its edge like the usual money-carrying wallet does. She could make out the city's coat-of-arms, then he squeezed it closed, with the same hand he was holding it in.

The police. She knew now who they were. She clapped both hands to her mouth, and held them there, at cross-angles to one another. People

started to turn and look curiously at her. Finally she let her hands drop again, so that she could speak without impediment. "What for? What have I done?" she asked them, in a sort of piteous, passive, boxed-in panic.

"We don't stand and talk to you here, in a place like this."

And the other one, the one who had been at her heels for a week, surly: "We didn't come here to buy our wives dresses, you know."

"Can't I go upstairs and change for a minute?" Just a minute more, anything for a minute more. You don't value freedom when you have unlimited lengths and stretches of it. Then when you don't have it any more, how sweet just one extra minute of it is.

"No delays, you're coming right as you are. Put a coat on over you."

"But I can't take it out of here. It belongs to the house. I'm not allowed to."

Renard intervened. "What's the trouble? Is this an arrest?"

"An interrogation."

"Then please, gentlemen, no commotion. We've all worked too long and too hard for this, to have it spoiled." And with that typical logic which had made her the successful business woman she was, she pointed out: "The dress is my property. You can't take it out of here unless you have an order for its confiscation. Which you don't have. Therefore the dress and the girl must be separated first before you can take the girl.

One of them scratched his head and mumbled in an aside to his partner s o m e t h i n g about, "—not only designs clothes but she's a lawyer in the bargain."

"Go upstairs, Leone," Renard said with a sort of localized sympathy. That is to say, a sympathy that was given freely and for the asking, until it collided with or obstructed her own one and only concern, the making and selling of dresses. Then it stopped and didn't go any further. "Maybe it'll work itself out all right. Let me hear from you, if you can."

The three of them stood and stared after her, watching her heels flicker up the stairs like little flesh-toned mallets tacking down a carpet.

Upstairs in the hall, where there were no longer guests to be reckoned with, she made a bee-line for the dressing-room door, elbowing everyone aside and almost stumbling in her haste to get in there. The door clapped shut after her.

"Somebody help me to get out of here, quick!" she

gasped.

They all turned on the long dressing-bench and stared at her with one accord.

"There're two men down there—"

"Two?" one girl said. "There must be twenty-five."

"This isn't anything to joke about. These two are cops. They're standing right down at the foot of the stairs. They're waiting to take me with them."

"How do you know it's you?"

"They said so right in front of Renard."

She had the dress off now. She was shivering from head to foot, and not from the cold either.

"By why you? What've you been up to?"

She summed the whole tragic little story up in just two words. "My fellow."

"What is he, a loser with the cops? I had one like that once. Funny, how those guys always make the best kind of —"

Somebody gave a scream of synthetic modesty, of protest actually more than modesty, and one of the two from downstairs was standing in the open doorway motioning to her with his head. "Are you going to come out of there, or do you want me to come in and get you?"

The inescapability of the thing made her lose her nerve for a minute; the brief reprieve to get out of the dress was now over, there was no chance of any further out, and she was right up face to face with the most precarious of all prospects: apprehension by the police on a provable and grounded charge. Anyone would have quailed.

She looked around at each of the other girls in turn, in a last-minute appeal for aid that was sunk even before it was spoken. "Marthe!—Desi!—Nico!—We all work here together. I see your faces day-in day-out, and you see mine. Isn't there one of you will stand up beside me now and help me, when I need it the most? I don't want them to take me, I don't want to go!"

They just looked at her helplessly. One of them lamented: "What can *we* do?" And another advised with sorrowful resignation: "Go with them, Leone. You have to anyway, and it takes all the fortitude out of it if you welsh."

The ghost of a mannequin, a few minutes ago so radiant and chic and lovely, came out of the dressing-room door and stood there looking at the two men who were waiting for her outside it. Not fashion-show johnnies though, by

any means.

S h e was immediately boxed-in between them and trundled along. They were not gentle, not gentle men, because it was not their business to be. "All right, hup, downstairs we go."

"What is it?" someone asked as she went past the crowd on the lower floor.

"She's being arrested. First time in the history of a fashion-show that's ever happened, I'd like to bet."

They took her in an unmarked police car back to the street where she lived. It knifed along glossy-black and somber, and above the jurisdiction of the stop-and-go lights, its siren moaning a dirge that fitted this terrible death-ride. Hope and love and freedom all in one going to their funerals.

And when they turned in there the street was jammed, packed with people, she'd never seen it like that before. Not even on the Fourteenth of July. Not even when another country's President came on a visit.

But they were all on one side of the street only, they were kept back there, by a rope and by some policemen on foot, in a long black line, s h o u l d e r-to-shoulder and faces peering over-shoulder, all looking over at the o p p o s i t e side of the street. And on the opposite side of the street there was nothing by comparison. Two or three policemen standing around, looking very small and lonely in all that emptiness. And something covered on the ground, like when you throw something away.

The drone of the crowd hushed temporarily as the new arrival drove up and stopped, and in the momentary silence the crack of the car-door rang out like a shot, as Leone was taken out and they closed it behind her.

They took her over to the quieter side of the street on a long diagonal walk, for the car that had brought her couldn't get in any closer, and long before she had reached there the crowd had started up its rolling, surf-like surge of sound again.

"There she is! That's her. She's the one the flat belongs to."

And a woman began again, for the twentieth time, to anyone around her who would listen: "They were creeping up the stairs, hoping to surprise him. Suddenly he came out of the flat and started firing at them, right there on the stairs. They backed down a little, and he ran up onto the

roof. You could see him up there, from the street. I saw him up there myself. They were firing up at him from the street, and he was firing down into the street at them. Then everything stopped, and you could tell someone had hit him.

"First he did a slow lean-over, like he was never going to fall, and then a somersault and then all the way down to the sidewalk — *Blapp!*"

Leone's escort tipped one edge of the covering back.

"You know this man?"

And then, "You know the penalty for harboring a fugitive?"

She freed her arm from him and sank slowly to her knees, with a peculiar, little-girl forlornness suggested by the attitude.

"How does a nice kid like you," he said, "come to get mixed up with such a type? You see what it's brought you to. It's too late now. You're in for it now. You can't go back and undo the damage now."

And kneeling there, sitting back on her own heels there, on that gritty Paris sidewalk, holding the dead head on her lap that had once kissed her, breathed against her breast, framing it gently with a hand against each side of it and rocking back and forth with it in aloneness and desertion and cold, she looked up at him and cried out in a bitter, defiant, and yet somehow almost exultant voice that rang up and down the packed street and hushed the jabbering crowd:

"And if I *could* go back, if I were given the chance, I'd do it exactly all over again! Because he was a *real* man. What would you understand about that? A *real* man. Just to know him, just to be loved by him, makes it all worthwhile. Go ahead, arrest me! Throw away the key forever! I still come out ahead . . .

"Still come out ahead."

RED POLICE ACCUSED OF FAKING REPORTS

Sovietskaya Rossiya, in a story published in May of this year, charged that pressure on police to report that 95 percent or more of their cases had been solved (Soviet police chiefs face the same pressure as factory managers, farm leaders and local government officials), had resulted in a situation where the dreaded Soviet police not only do not always get their man—they sometimes don't even bother to try. . . . One police chief reported that 98% of the criminal cases his office had handled had been solved. Actually—a third of the cases remained unsolved.

the glass gravestone

by Joseph Commings

The man standing at the foot of the escalator, wearing the purple turban and the silver-tipped black beard, was Surendranath Das. He was a United Nations delegate from India. I walked toward him, the lobby floor under my feet all black and white marble, like a giant checkerboard.

Das seemed to be hesitating. This was the *down* escalator from the mezzanine in the Secretariat. So he wasn't thinking of taking it up. I hadn't expected to see him. I hadn't expected to see anybody except Sir Quiller Selwyn and Senator Banner. Like any other office building, The United Nations Secretariat closed up shop at six. It was now a dark nine p.m.

At the rap of my heels, Das turned. He was a fat-bodied man with a handshake that was moist and flabby. Squinting across the deserted lobby through his glasses with the tortoise-shell rims, he placed me. His brindled beard parted in a grinning grimace. "How

The United Nations has been called "a world apart" from the rest of us, much to the distress, to put it mildly, of our latter-day advocates of knownothingism. But no world organization, no invisible boundary, had been known to stop the indomitable Senator Banner, when he was on the warpath. Like this time, when murder had been committed at the U.N.!

do you do?" He spoke in cultured English in a high piping voice. "Y o u ' r e—ah—the newspaper reporter."

"Bob Farragut," I said with a return grimace. "Associated Press." There was a fine distinction and I wanted to keep it. I glanced upward toward the mezzanine with its subdued lights. "Mr. Das, have you seen Sir Quiller?"

"Not yet. I was waiting for him. He sent for me."

"You?" I wanted to a s k more, but there was no time.

Sir Quiller Selwyn appeared at the top of the descending escalator. He was a squat bald-headed man with bushy eyebrows and a taciturn way. Even at this distance I could see a look on his face that I had never seen there before. It was a look of naked alarm.

He didn't seem to see me at all.

"Das!" he cried. "Have you taken leave of your senses? They're the most deadly—!" He put his feet on the moving steps. "Wait till I get down there!"

Das and I were standing together. I glanced sideways at him to see how he was taking this severe admonition. Oddly, his coffee-colored face had turned toward me. His brown eyes looked sensitive and full of hurt.

Yet his tone was calm. "I should like to ask you, Mr. Farragut, what *you* are doing here."

"I—"

There was a sharp sound above us like a pistol shot.

We both looked up at the escalator.

Sir Quiller was now about halfway down, still over twenty feet away from us. I was shocked to see him beginning to crumple over. His hands were half lifted involuntarily toward his head. The most horrifying thing about the man was that his throat, above his stiff white collar, was all a red gash. And blood was already coming from it in bright red spurts.

His throat had been cut!

His body pitched forward on the glittering metal steps, being brought automatically down to where we stood dumbfounded. At that moment I tried to remember my newspaper training to see *everything*. But there was nothing else—not near him, above him, or around him.

He came rolling off the endless treadmill at our feet, immaculately dressed and thoroughly dead.

Even the blood was beginning to stop pumping out of the slash that had opened his throat from ear to ear.

Das breathed something in

his own language.

I bent over Sir Quiller.

"Look!" said Das. He was pointing.

Pushed up against the body from behind was an open old-fashioned razor. Its keen blade lay polished and gleaming under the lights.

I straightened up. I didn't touch anything except the emergency button that stopped the escalator.

"Get the guard at the door," I said to Rass.

I didn't wait to see if he obeyed me or not. I was already running up the stalled steps to the mezzanine.

I encountered nothing on my way up. At the top, I was in a wide corridor flanked by office doors. Straight ahead of me, about two dozen feet away, was an open door with a light showing through. I ran toward it and looked in.

Seated at a desk under the glow of neon tubing was Bernice Harper. She was operating a tri-lingual typewriter. Papers were scattered about her as she worked industriously. But you never bothered to look at papers when you saw Bernice Harper.

Her hair was blonde, light and beautiful, fanning down below her wide clean shoulders. She glanced questioningly up at me with large blue eyes. There was strength in her face, in the large red mouth and in the dimpled chin. But most men looked at her face last. Her body was stronger even than her face. Earthy but never dirty was the way I liked to put it. Yet she disdained plunging necklines. Tonight everything was modestly covered up in a blue taffeta dress that was closed to the frilly throat with platter buttons.

She was Sir Quiller Selwyn's personal secretary.

"Bernice," I said, slowing down and walking in, "Promise me. No hysterics."

"What is it?" She stood up. I couldn't imagine her having hysterics.

"It's Sir Quiller. Gentle, girl. He's dead."

"Dead!" Her face streamed white under the makeup. "He left this office only a minute ago!"

"Yes. It happened on the escalator."

"You mean his heart? But he never complained—"

"I can't say for sure just what did happen. I've got to find out. Are you the only one up here?"

"I think—" She paused.

From the dim corridor outside came a mechanical sound. *Spok-spok. Spok-spok.* . .

We both stared at the door.

A tall, well-built, youngish

fellow walked in with a limp. Every time he moved his left leg you heard the artificial knee - socket. Jack Croydon was one Anzac who had left a leg in Viet Nam while his volunteer company was fighting Cong guerrillas.

"Hullo!" he said, staring quizzically back at us. "Am I as frightening as all that?"

Croydon was from Queensland, Australia. He spoke with a burr that was cousin to a Tipperary brogue. And how the women ate it up when he told them about his rugged days on a stock farm before he took himself off to war. He was now a member of the Secretariat.

"Croydon," I said, "I'm only one step ahead of the police. They'll be here in a few minutes. Sir Quiller's napoo. Dead. His throat's cut."

"Good God!" said Croydon, limping briskly to Bernice's side. "Did he do it himself?"

I thought about the highly polished razor that had come down the escalator with the body. "I don't think so," I said. "Bernice, I'll have to use your phone. I want to get this story in to a rewrite man. This is one scoop I don't relish."

"Of course," murmured Bernice.

I dialed and began to talk. Sir Quiller was this month's President of the Security Council. He had been handling delicate diplomatic secrets and he would be sorely missed.

As I rattled off what few facts I knew into the phone, I saw Croydon rest his tanned hand over Bernice's in a comforting fashion. I could have kicked myself for being such a slowpoke about doing that myself. Now he had the edge on me. In spite of her generous body, the hand under his was small and fragile. The kind of hand you want to hold. A little girl's hand. Her feet and ankles were small too.

The look she gave him in return was pure catnip.

I put down the phone. "Croydon, have you seen anybody around the escalator?"

"There's nobody on this floor but us," said Croydon with finality.

"Why was Sir Quiller meeting Senator Banner?"

"He never told me," said Bernice. "He merely asked me to stay and work late. Shouldn't we—shouldn't we go down?"

"You'd better stay put, Bernice," said Croydon. "A cut throat is a bit nasty. Watch the office. I'll face it out with Farragut. Come along."

I followed Croydon and his mechanical leg outside. He

closed the door after us.

He caught my arm. "This sounds ugly. We must try to spare Bernice all we can."

"I'll go along with that," I said.

"Lord, she's a handsome girl. Some people in my country would call her a bonzer peach."

"They'd call her a peach anywhere," I said grudgingly.

"Do you think I stand half a chance?" he asked.

He wasn't really asking me. He was asking himself.

Downstairs again. The first of the police had arrived. I stayed long enough with them to corroborate Surendranath Das' story. Then I heard him say: "If you want me further, I'll be at India House."

I walked out of the Secretariat lobby with him.

Outside it was a cold, raw April night, thick with fog. Ceiling zero. It could explain why Senator Banner had not shown up if he was taking a plane in from Washington.

Das melted away toward his parked car.

Mournful foghorns croaked on the East River. I buttoned up my putty-colored aquascutum against the mist and walked north on First to catch the bus at 49th Street that would take me crosstown to Park Avenue and the Waldorf.

The Waldorf lobby was all old rose carpet and tall alabaster marble columns and dignified hush. I could have used some of this kind of luxury. Thick rugs and thick wallets and thick bodies. I walked to the elevator bank. I didn't have to ask where the Selwyns were staying. They had a permanent suite in the Tower.

I rode up to the 33rd floor, went to a door, and bumped a brass knocker.

Moira Selwyn opened the door as if on cue and for a long moment we looked at each other. Her shoulders were set stiffly.

After that tense moment there was a slight thaw. Her smile was as dangerous as thin ice. "Come in," she said in clipped British. "I was expecting you."

I almost dropped my hat. "Me?"

"You—or s o m e o n e like you."

I was in and she shut the door softly.

"It's about—" I began.

"Something dreadful's happened to my husband. You wouldn't have any other reason to come to me." There was practically no change in her placid expression. "How

did I know? Call it intuition. Or premonition. Anything you like. I'm strongly psychic."

"I never believed in it."

"You don't know enough about women. But that's to be expected. You're an American. Metaxa?"

"Who?" I said with a start.

While she was speaking she had lit a cigaret. One of those foreign brands. The brittle smile continued, as if she were mocking me. "G r e e k grape brandy."

I watched her walk across the room to a cut-glass decanter. She was wearing an ashes-of-roses cocktail suit over a foundation that was a corsetiere's sonnet. Moira was lithe anyway. Her face had those sharp, taut lines that must have made her look boyish in her teens. Her hair was blue-black and cut crisply short like a poodle's and in one pink earlobe was only one blue chip of an earring. I watched her long legs move provocatively underneath the sheath skirt. And I was incensed at her remark that I didn't know enough about women.

In her lurked potentialities neither banal nor restrained. Yet, while sexually she had whet many a man's appetite, I had never heard of any having an affair with her.

She was in her proper setting. On the floor was an all-over carpet of midnight blue and there were chairs w i t h seats of lustrous black satin.

She returned with the decanter and two glasses. The cigaret glowed in her plum-red mouth. Her black and b r i l l i a n t eyes were half closed in the drifting smoke. At a low, lacquer-black cocktail table she bent over and poured two drinks—sweet, heavy, and dark.

Her moist lips m o v e d slightly around the cigaret as she handed me the Greek brandy. "As a race, you're all so very practical, though when it comes to us—and I mean w o m e n—you just don't know beans. An American, my dear, gives more attention to his motorcar than he does to his wife. Reading a newspaper, he'll stop to ogle a man in a baseball suit before he'll turn to a picture of a girl showing her legs."

Sipping her brandy, she walked to a settee in dusky violet, with orange-tan pillows, and sat down with the fluid grace of a mannequin. Every movement she made was deliberately for effect. She attended to the gratification of her senses as carefully as somebody else would cultivate a rose garden.

"What is it you see in *baseball?*" She crossed her legs.

They were long and slim, a golden honey color in seamless nylons. A thin silver love chain winked roguishly on one slender ankle. Her perfect teeth showed and her ripe-red tongue darted. "Nine y o u n g morons running around a pasture on a bloody hot afternoon."

I wanted to make a sneering reply that some of them weren't so young—but she had two strikes on her already. I took brandy to cover my silence. It had a slight resin flavor.

She carefully tapped ash from her cigaret into a bronze tray. "In most European countries a boy is under the bridge with a girl when he's fifteen. In this country he's still playing baseball at twenty-one." She looked me over from my Heidelburg haircut to the toes of my oxfords as if trying to commit me to memory. "I haven't anything personal against you. What do you think of all this? . . . Stop standing there mum, dear boy, and *say* something."

I said: "I think you're an extraordinary woman.

"Now you're beginning to show some perception."

"But if this baseball talk got out, you'd be rated as the most unsympathetic woman in America. . . I'm sorry."

The smoke of her cigaret was clinging wraithlike to her attractive angular face and to her dark poodle hair. "Why?"

"Your husband is dead."

Poised, she sniffed brandy. "I told you I was expecting dire news."

"The details are a little grim," I warned.

"Then don't go into them. It'll be gruesome enough when the police come tramping in. Is this why you came to me so quickly—to prepare me?"

"I wanted to see you first. Sir Quiller knew many diplomatic secrets. He may have shared some with you."

She tilted her glass. "You mean my own life may be in danger? You *are* a dear boy . . . As his wife, I *did* share confidences with him. He always thought I was very astute."

"I'd say so too." I put down my glass. "I hate to run. But this'll be a hectic night."

"Yes," she said. She didn't stir. "Shall I see you again?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Good night."

I nodded at her and walked toward the suite door, feeling her eyes like ice cubes sliding down my back all the way out.

In a booth I phoned long distance to my pipeline in Washington.

"He hopped off in a copter about three hours ago," was the reply.

I went out to Lexington Avenue and stopped a taxi and told the cabbie to take me to LaGuardia Airport. Hang the expense. It'd all go on my well-padded swindle sheet.

The cab crawled over Queensboro Bridge.

At the airfield everything was grounded. "Bird-walking weather," said one of the loafing pilots.

I meandered out into the soup, the airport lights fuzzy around me. Finally I heard a whirring sound making erratic movements somewhere up above. An invisible aircraft landed out on a strip. Loud voices swirled in on the fog. Heavy footfalls approached on the concrete.

Senator Brooks U. Banner loomed out of the thick brew, coming in on the beam of his own Pittsburgh stogie. He was big and fat, with a rain-barrel figure. His white campaign hat was crammed down on his square head. An old tarp was thrown over his beefy shoulders like a poncho. I stepped out of the weak glow of the landing lights.

I said: "Let me introduce myself, Senator. I'm Bob Farragut, the AP district man at the UN."

Banner stopped dead, peering around like a buffalo making up his mind to charge. And Banner was just as shaggy. "Lemme get my bearings, sonny boy. That gyrene that brought me here in a flying windmill flew by the seat of his pants all the way . . . How in hell'd you know I was coming?"

"Right from the Washington grapevine."

"Goddammit! I'm supposed to be on a secret mission! Ain't your stoolies got anything else to do besides tapping my telephones!"

"I've got news for you, Senator. Bad news. You're too late to meet Sir Quiller. He was killed in the Secretariat at nine o'clock."

"Killed!" He turned so that the murky light fell across his grim jowls for an instant.

"We don't know how or why."

"I'll tell you *why* in one word." He peered around at the fog-shapes suspiciously. "*Spies!*"

Then he didn't say another word as we plowed in through the rotunda and out to the ramp to a taxi.

"The UN," said Banner to the driver as he stumbled in. "C'mon, bloodhound!" I followed. We settled back as the cab lurched forward. Banner growled. "So they got old Quill! I thought mebbe he'd make news some day by moving into 10 Downing Street

as prime minister. Now it's just an obit. Haaak. He phoned me only this morning. Hush-hush secrets have been leaking out to the Commies. Secrets from *his* files. Rotten business. I was gonna meet him tonight, cuz he said he'd hand over the bugger that was doing it. . . Tell me how he got killed."

By the time we reached the Secretariat, Banner knew as much about it as I did.

There was a corps of police brass on the scene now. The Secretary General was there, pale but trying not to show his anxiety.

The tarp rustling on his shoulders, Banner lumbered over to the Secretary General, sweeping off his hat to reveal a mop of grizzled hair. They talked quietly for a few minutes. Banner's ruddy face was even grimmer as he turned back to me.

"No score," he said. He prowled around the foot of the escalator, went up to the mezzanine, and came d o w n again. "Shenanigans at the UN! You were one of the eyewitnesses, Farragut—prob'ly the only reliable one. Where's a quiet place we can talk? Hah? The delegates' lounge!"

I could tell that he was quite familiar with the buildings the way he found the right doors. The Conference Building is a low-lying structure catercorner behind the tall glass headstone of the Secretariat. We went in that direction.

Banner was saying: "The diplomatic game is the toughest in the world. It's the iron claw in the velvet mitt, all right. You gamble millions of lives at every throw of the dice. And if you ever crap-out, like old Quill did, you're a dead man."

By the time we reached the delegates' lounge we were all by ourselves.

We were in a block-long room with slanted glass paneling at the north end of the Conference Building. T h e lounge was thickly carpeted and stuffed with fan-backed Danish chairs, as well as tables and leather sofas. The chief feature of the room was the Honduras mahogany bar. Overhanging it was a huge relief map of the world, made of Cuban mahogany overlaid on Canadian ash. The only discouraging aspect was that there was no bartender.

"We call this the chicken yard," I said, thinking of ruffled feathers.

"Waal," rumbled Banner, "tonight we're the only two roosters on the manure pile." He looked thirstily at the bar, then made up his mind. He wore a shabby frockcoat bulg-

ing at the pockets. Grubbing into one of the pockets, he dug out a key. "See if that'll open the likker cabinet." He tossed it at me.

Miraculously the key fitted.

I placed my arms akimbo on the bar. "What'll it be, Senator? There's Dutch gin, Polish slivovitz, Mexican tequilla, Russian vodka."

He glided a five-dollar-bill across the bar. "Stick that in the till and hand out that dimple bottle of Haig & Haig and we'll shoot the breeze."

I did. He took his straight. I had soda with mine.

"Now," said Banner in the hush of the deserted lounge, "how was it done?"

I'd been doing a lot of thinking about that. "Werewolves," I said.

Banner smacked his lips. He liked the sound of that word. But he didn't say anything. He waited for me to continue.

I said: "That hard core of Nazis that were left in Germany after the Second World War. They called themselves Werewolves. They fought dirty. They'd stretch a thin wire across a country road and when one of our jeeps would whiz by, the wire'd lop the GI's head off."

"Ho!" said Banner. "You've been thinking that old Quill was killed on the escalator by the same gimmick. A thin wire stretched across would ketch him just under the chin as he traveled down." He frowned. "Waal, sir, I hate to throw cold water on you at the start, but there're too many counts against it. An escalator moves slow — not fast like one of those jeeps in Germany. A wire might've given Quill a bad nick and knocked him over backwards. But you told me he fell forward. What's more, you scooted up that escalator half a minute later and you didn't encounter any wires. Wires! Judas priest! You saw the condition of his throat. A deep vicious razorlike slash!"

"But it wasn't the razor!"

"No. Not *that* razor. Not the one that was found with him. The coppers told me that there wasn't a trace of blood or a fingerprint found on it. Why was it there? The killer knew we'd look for a weapon, so as a mocking gesture we were given one."

"What else do you think, Senator?"

"I think that the killer was actually holding the weapon at the instant of the murder. Yaas. That could be."

"How so? There was nobody within twenty-five feet of him when he was struck down."

Banner scowled. "Waal

mebbe *you* got some explanations. Let's hear 'em!"

I said carefully: "There's a balcony effect around the escalator on the mezzanine. If somebody were standing on that balcony, we couldn't see him from below. Croydon and Bernice were both on the mezzanine. Croydon comes from the wilds of Australia. He'd know more than any of us how to handle a boomerang. Suppose he threw some sort of boomerang at Sir Quiller. It'd return—"

"Wrong!" said Banner with a thump on the leather chair-arm. "A boomerang'd return to the thrower only if it *missed* its target!"

After a painful pause I said: "I've wondered about Surendranath Das."

"I've been wondering about him too," muttered Banner.

"That turban he wears. Do you know that when you unwind one of those turbans they reach six or eight feet?"

Banner howled with glee. "Now *you're* reaching!"

I felt angry. He was simply playing with me. "Of course I'm reaching! I'm turning over every possibility to guess what the murder weapon was!"

"Yass?" He was hardly paying attention. "I know what the weapon is. What I wanna know is—where's it hidden?" His eyes were speculating on the walls.

"You know!"

"It's still in the building," he went on, yammering to himself. "Everybody that's gone out has had a police shakedown. That gal Bernice and Croydon are still here. So it ain't been spirited out."

"What's it look like, Senator?"

"You'll see—when we find it."

Sometimes, in spite of his fame as a murder expert, I wondered if he weren't an old fraud. It could be that he knew no more what it looked like than I did. Yet he was so acute that he'd recognize it for what it was the instant somebody else dug it up.

"Not even a hint?" I coaxed. "Is it some strange instrument?"

"Strange? No sir. It's a pretty common thing. Though they ain't as common as they once were."

"That explains a *lot*," I said sarcastically.

He chuckled. "Yass, it does, doesn't it? It explains, frinstance, that Moira Selwyn, though a logical suspect, could not have done it. She's the only one of our li'l group who wasn't here tonight. The guards know who came and went . . . D'you know," he said suddenly, "where Ber-

nice Harper comes from?"

I nodded wearily. "She was born and brought up in Brooklyn. Lives on Columbia Heights. Why?"

"This's one place," he said tormentingly, "where people come naturally from all parts of the world."

"Really?" I said acidly.

Banner swallowed the last of his whisky. "I wanna have a chat with Das. Where's he at?"

"I heard him tell the police he'd be at India House."

Banner struggled up out of his soft leather chair. I put away the bottle, soda, and glasses.

We went back through the quiet, darkened corridors to the lobby of the Secretariat.

It was crawling like a beehive.

Banner took one sour look around. Then he said: "They ain't found it. Why wait? Let's scram up to 64th Street."

64th Street, just off Fifth Avenue, was a canyon of cold fog. We got out of the cab at India House, stumbled up the front steps and entered the pink marble foyer.

We took the spinterish self-service elevator up to the fourth floor where Surendranath Das had a temporary office. Under a green-shaded desk lamp we found a lotus-eyed girl in a sari reading a thick book. She smiled at me and said hello, then looked a little frightened at Banner. He had that effect on some people.

I said: "Hello, Happy." I'd got to know her around the UN. She had told me that the red dot she had on her forehead just over her eyebrows was not a sign of caste. It was a dab of kum-kum denoting happiness. So I called her Happy. "This is Senator Banner."

Banner, his tarp in fat folds, pushed forward. "Lemme see Das."

"Yes, sair," said Happy obediently. "This way, if you please."

She rapped discreetly on a closed door before opening it. I could see Das' purple turban and coffee-colored face and speckled black beard hovering over another desk. He was having a midnight snack of chicken curry, pickled onions in a bottle, fritters, and saki. He half rose at Banner's blundering entrance

"Senator Banner!"

"Whaddya know, Das! No innerductions needed! Good! If I had more time I'd chin with you about the Crims."

"Crims?"

"Those hereditary criminals in your country, saheeb. They operate by paralyzing

geese 'n' sheep before stealing 'em. Interesting rascals. Only there's the more pressing problem of a man getting his throat slashed on an escalator without a soul being near him."

"Ah yes. Sir Quiller." Das subsided again to absently spear a pickled onion out of the bottle. "Will you sit down, gentlemen?" he went on in his high piping English.

"Yass." Banner headed for the most comfortable chair. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Happy slip out again. Banner was saying: "This here now AP feller. Bob Farragut, says both you and he were witnesses to the killing. He says he saw nothing but old Quill. Did you see anything else?"

"Nothing else," answered Das.

"You *heard* something!"

I stirred uneasily. Yes, we heard something. Something that didn't fit in at all.

"Ah yes, Senator," said Das. "I heard a loud report like a pistol shot. I'm sure Mr. Farragut did too."

"Wait a minute, saheeb! What businesses have you been in? How qualified are you to judge the sound of a pistol shot?"

"I come from a family of rich clothing merchants," said Das placidly. "My father and brothers have shops in New Delhi and on the Chowringee in Calcutta. But I know firearms, Senator. I've been on many a shoot with the Maharajah of Jubbulpore. I've used everything from the big bore for tigers to a small automatic. Yet *that* sounded like no caliber I'd ever heard."

"Yass," muttered Banner, "I didn't think it would . . . Now, sir! This's more personal. Old Quill was gonna meet me at the Secretariat tonight. It was gonna be a meeting that'd spell curtains for somebody. What were you doing there?"

Das screwed closed the lid on the pickled onions bottle. "Sir Quiller had sent a message to come and see him. He sounded urgent."

"Did he say why?"

"No, Senator."

"Hey? He musta given some indication."

"I really—"

I butted in finally. "There *was* something. He l o o k e d alarmed. As soon as he saw Mr. Das he shouted."

Banner swarmed around in his chair. "Shouted what?"

"How *was* that again?" I tried to recollect. "As well as I can remember — *Das! Have you taken leave of your senses! They're the most deadly* —! Then he cut himself off and started down. Correct,

Mr. Das?"

Das was leaning forward at his desk, absorbed in my recitation, grimacing through his thick beard. "I'm afraid you are correct, Mr. Farragut. But I assure you, Sir Quiller was unduly alarmed. Everything was quite safe. They—"

Banner thumped the desktop and the china dishes rattled. "Lemme be judge of that, Das! What in blue blazes are you talking about?"

Das leaned back and sighed. "I'm sure Sir Quiller was referring to what I have in a big satchel in my office at the Secretariat. It's a pair of king cobras that I brought from India as a good-will gesture. I was going to present them to the Bronx Zoo."

I wasn't as bland as he was. "King cobras! The most deadly of all poisonous snakes!"

"As Sir Quiller f e a r e d," nodded Das. "But, gentlemen the satchel is securely closed with safety catches. They can't possibly get—"

I turned to look at Banner to see how he was taking all this. There was a silence from his side of the room that was overwhelming. He was sitting there thunderstruck, his jaw unhinged, the stogie having fallen out of his mouth into his vast lap.

Then—

"Snakes!" he hollered. "Great Caesar's ghost! We gotta get back there!"

And he went out through the door like a hurricane.

On the wild ride back to the UN I got a grim briefing on king cobras.

Their fangs inject a poison so venomous that it can kill a man inside of a few minutes. They have great lashlike bodies, loops of pale olive, that grow to a length of fifteen feet.

What this had to do with the murder of Sir Quiller I couldn't even grasp. Sir Quiller hadn't been poisoned. Banner wasn't explaining. After the king cobra lecture, he spent the rest of the ride chomping the dead stogie and scowling at the back of the cabbie's neck.

We beat our way out of the fog, came into the court around the great basin of the pool, and, leaving the cab, spun in through the revolving glass doors of the Secretariat.

A big husky Irish cop was standing there with a UN guard.

B a n n e r halted a n d snapped: "Has any staff member left?"

The Irish cop gave Banner a half salute. "Yes, sir. The young fella with the limp and the girl. Only not together. He left a bit before she did."

"And one of 'em," said Banner slowly, "was carrying a satchel!"

He had a knowing look, as if he meant to amaze everybody with his remarkable powers of second sight.

But he was the one to get surprised.

"Yes, sir," said the cop. "The girl was."

"The girl!" Banner, his tarp flapping like the membranous wings of a bat, rocked back on his heels. He'd had a set-back, that was for sure. He braced himself again. "You looked inside it, I hope!"

"I did. I was ordered to search everything. There was two of the foulest divils you ever clapped your eyes on, their bodies all twined up in one another. As soon as they saw me they began to raise up their orange-colored heads. They had ruddy yella eyes that glowed. Wide-awake, they was. I took one good look and I saw all I wanted to see. There was nothing in there but those snakes' bodies. And I slammed it shut on them again."

Banner worried his double chins with his fat fingers. "Where'd she say she was taking 'em?"

"To the Bronx Zoo. Where else could you take them? And that's the same direction I heard her give to the cab driver. There was something else she had him do. She told him to tie that satchel to the outside of the cab before they drove away. Not that I blame her any. I wouldn't want them divils inside the cab with me neither."

The UN guard nodded solemn agreement.

Banner was gone. He was flouncing out into the murky night again with me sticking as close behind him as a splinter in the seat of his pants. I wouldn't have lost him now—or the story—no matter how hard he tried. He ran down a cab on First Avenue. I reached it in time to hear him bellow: "Bronx Zoo! And there's a sawbuck for you if you break all traffic rules!"

I leaped in behind him. The cab started so fast I almost dislocated my neck.

Banner was howling: "For crissakes, never mind that red light! We gotta ketch 'em before they turn those snakes loose!"

The cabbie drove as if he had two maniacs in back—and we weren't far from it.

The memory of that journey northward remains a blur. I hardly knew where we were. Banner kept peering through the fog-curtained windows and finally an-

nounced: "Southern Boulevard. We're tearing past the Zoo now. Turn right, cabbie, at Fordham. We'll try the Pelham Parkway entrance."

The cab skidded greasily on wet pavement, and I thought I heard a faint scream as we missed a pedestrian by a hair, then we came to a squealing stop at some mist-enshrouded ornate gates.

Banner flopped out and flung money at the cabbie. "You earned it!" He ran full tilt at the driveway's iron gates and crashed into them. "Locked! . . . They're outside somewhere. Foller the railing along, Farragut. Lissen for voices!"

I listened.

The sparse traffic on the Parkway was a muffled whir. We blundered among some bare trees and budding shrubbery. Banner, beside me, hissed and raised his hand.

"Look! Over on the left! See those shadders!"

Muzzy silhouettes stood close together in the bushes. A man and a woman. There were murmuring sounds as they spoke. The man had taken the satchel.

"He's opening it," hissed Banner.

I could barely see.

Banner gulped. "Suffering sunfish! He's dumped 'em out on the ground!"

"The snakes?"

"What else, you nitwit? We're almost too late now. We gotta charge in and ketch 'em red-handed. I'll scare 'em stiff with a Comanche war whoop. And you—wait!"

He let out a howl like a dervish sitting on a hot cookstove. I felt my skin shrivel.

Then he wallowed forward, shouting: "The game's up!" or something just as corny.

There was a stir of real agitation from the man and woman.

Banner whirled, pointing. "And you, Farragut, dive into that bush! Quick!"

By now I was beginning to have an unreasoning regard for his screwball orders. Tonight we'd all gone mad. I flung myself in a foolhardy dive into the crackling brush.

When I landed I knew how foolhardy.

Smack under me was a thick coil. I supported myself against it with my outstretched hands. It was scaly and long and as thick as my wrist. And as I instinctively grasped it, it began to glide from under my faltering fingers.

Sweat soaked me like a cold shower.

I heard Banner's holler: "Hold onto it, Farragut! One end's dangerous!"

Both ends were dangerous as far as I was concerned!

I heard the girl scream. There was a thrashing of bodies. Night birds screeched in their vaulted cages. In the distance a restless lion roared.

The coil under my fingers was yanking violently to get free. I fastened myself onto it.

I heard Banner's warning. "Don't let go, Farragut! Your life depends on it!"

I'd heard of riding a tiger —but never a king cobra.

"Grab holt and *pull!*"

When you face a life span of only a few minutes, you get mighty reckless.

I got my knees braced on the ground underneath me, tightened my grip on the sliding thing, and tugged backwards. It held staunchly, as if the front end of the cobra were snubbed around a post. It was all very unusual. It gave me the courage to yank back again.

It yanked in return—so roughly that I was dragged a few feet through the shrubs.

I dug my heels in hard and hauled away with all my strength.

Something came loose.

I toppled over backwards, falling flat on my spine. The coils came hissing through the air, landing in a heap on my chest.

For a moment I didn't breathe, as sweat drenched me.

It lay over me and around me. Gingerly I touched the end. Then I knew I was safe.

It was an incredibly long rawhide whip!

The most fitting place for the last act was the delegates' lounge. Led by the Secretary General and the police inspector, our headliners trooped in —Surendranath Das, Bernice Harper, Jack Croydon, and Moira Selwyn.

Banner told them all to be seated, then he scowled around at their faces. "I got all of you here so that if I say something wrong you can stick in your two cents. But," he added ominously, "I don't expect any interruptions."

Stretched out full length on the immaculate carpeting was the whip. It had a shortish handle, a long trunk about two inches thick, which gradually tapered to a mere ribbon at the end. A good twenty-five feet in all.

"That," said Banner, pointing, "is called, among other things, a Spanish bull whip." He paused. "There was a wunnerful old movie. Old Doug Fairbanks in *Don Q, Son of Zorro.*" For a moment his frosty blue eyes had a far-

away look of nostalgia. Overcome by memory, he bleated: "Why ain't they making pitchers like *that* any more? . . . Haaak! Waal, in that whizbang movie Fairbanks used a whip like this 'un. With it he could snuff out burning candles without disturbing the wick, or flick seegars outta a stooge's mouth. In the Old West, bullwhackers could cut a notch in a maverick's ear at twenty paces, or snap a bandana outta a man's hip pocket and still leave the seat of the pants. What I'm driving at is that there's no dispute about how skillful a man can become in using one of these bullwhacks."

He stopped and stared at the faces.

"They're not used in this country much any more, 'cept at Wild West shows. But there's another place as woolly as our West ever was. Right now! I kinda forgot to tell you, accidentally on purpose, that this's also called an Australian stock whip. And a stock farm is just another way of saying a cattle ranch!"

Everybody involuntarily glanced at Jack Croydon. It was then that I saw that two cops had come in to stand behind his chair. Yet he was sitting there, his mechanical leg stretched out comfortably in front of him, taking it all in as if it were being put on for his amusement. As cool a cuss as I've ever seen.

Banner's buzzsaw v o i c e droned into the silence. "Only one of us, y'see, has had the background to be able to use this thing. Now you say, as vicious as a whip of this sort is, it couldn't've sliced a man's throat as if with a razor. True. But lookit the thin end! A piece of steel, about three i n c h e s long, honed razor-sharp on both sides, has been fastened to the end of the whip. With the deadly accuracy of long practice, you could slash a man's throat while standing twenty-five feet away from him. It could be all over in an instant. And the only clue as to how it was done would be the pistol-like crack of the whip!"

I wondered now why it hadn't occurred to me in the very beginning.

"Sure," said Banner, with pure disgust, "it was you, Croydon. You were peddling old Quill's secrets to the Commies. You found out that he was gonna expose your filthy hide. You killed him to prevent exposure. It's as simple as that!"

Croydon finally spoke. His voice was strong, though he had to clear his throat with a slight cough before he could begin. "How would I know

what Sir Quiller's secrets were? How did I know he was going to expose me?" He looked like a man with an ace up his sleeve.

"Quit being coy!" snapped Banner. "You're Moira Selwyn's lover! Is that b l u n t enough for you? Hah! That scourges like the whip, don't it? . . . Yass, Farragut, are *you* surprised, after the front you saw him putting up with Bernice Harper? Nice diversion. Actually he was smooching after hours with Moira. Moira admitted to you that her hubby confided in her. Poor old Quill didn't suspect her hand in it at all. What she learned from Quill she passed on to Croydon. *She* knew the secrets—and *she* knew that Quill was gonna jerk the rug from under Croydon tonight. She warned her lover in ample time. No wonder she was expecting bad news about her husband when you showed up at the Waldorf suite!

"So, knowing the game was up, Croydon had plenty of time to prepare the whip. Carrying it into the building was no t r o u b l e. Nobody'd search him. He then stalked Quill, waiting for the opportune moment. It came when Quill was going down the escalator. Croydon was in a perfect position on that balcony facing the escalator, hidden from the sight of anybody below. He trailed out the long whip—then let it fly at Quill's throat."

There was a sob. It came from Bernice. I could have knocked out all of Croydon's teeth then and there for causing Bernice one moment of unhappiness.

Banner considered. "Croydon's pretense with Bernice served its purpose. He hadda get the whip outta the building again, before we found it. This time it wouldn't be easy. Everybody was being shaken down. Then he remembered Das' snakes and the fuss Quill'd been kicking up about 'em. I gotta give you credit for that cunning bit, Croydon. You simply put the snakelike whip in with the whiplike snakes. A quick gander into that crawling satchel would only reveal a twisted mass of greenish folds. The cops'd let it pass out the door. Still, *you* didn't wanna chance carrying it. You sweet-talked li'l Bernice!"

"I did it for him," she murmured, clutching a handkerchief. "But I thought it was only the snakes. He said I ought to bring them up to the Bronx Zoo right away."

"What excuse did he give for not bringing 'em by himself?"

"He said he had to see the

curator first about opening the Zoo at that time of night. Naturally he left first and I followed—with the satchel. We met there.

"Uh-huh," said Banner. "He also instructed you to have the satchel carted *outside* the cab you took. Y'know why? So the snakes wouldn't get nice 'n' warm in the heated cab. Outside it was cold. The cold'd make the snakes sluggish. They'd be pretty near harmless when he dumped both outta the satchel to get the whip."

That was right, of course. I'd mentioned how chilly the night was several times.

Banner's face was grim. "The real danger, then, was the whip in Croydon's hand. That was what was lying along the ground, Farragut. That was what I wanted you to pounce on and hold useless. Cuz if he'd been able to use that on us, we'd've been slashed to ribbons. There was a minute there when I thought it was a narrer squeak."

"*You* thought it was!"

"What utter rot!" said Moira's clipped voice. Her black brilliant eyes glittered at Banner.

Croydon's face glowed with anger. "It is rot! I left a leg in a rice paddy while fighting those bastards. Do you think I'd turn traitor for them now?"

Banner snapped back: "Benedict Arnold almost lost a leg too when he was on our side. That didn't stop him from ratting out later."

The Secretary General cut in: "The Senator's logic is irrefutable. Nothing else could have happened."

"Take 'em out," ordered Banner. "Her too. She's an accessory before the fact. When you get him into court he won't have *one* leg to stand on!"

After they had gone, the Secretary General shook Banner's hand strongly, not saying anything. He was too sincere for a speech.

Banner said: "I'll leave the legal headache of imprisoning them to you."

Surendranath Das, picking his way out, was murmuring a gem of wisdom from the Code of Manu, the old Hindu law: "The house which is cursed by a woman perishes utterly."

This time I wasn't such a slowpoke with Bernice. I rested my hand on hers while at the same time trying to look like a sheep dog finding a shorn lamb that had been lost in a snowdrift.

Perhaps as Moira said, I didn't know much about women. But I was learning.

in spite of the devil

by Leighla Whipper

Miss Bennett's g r e a t e s t value to her profession had been her complete lack of feeling. She tried now to tell herself that no emotion had entered in her last job*—it was simply an infinitesimal mistake in her aim that had made her change the history of politics of the strategically located country of Brisena the previous month.

As she sat alone in her New York apartment clad in one of her Parisian originals and half listening to her stereo selections, she gave herself the luxury of conjuring up the shocked surprise on the face of General (and ex-President) Antonio Ruz y Ochoa when the bullet had caught him on the left side of his gaudy diagonal red ribbon, part of the Order of Something or Other. The silencer had done its work, and her exit had been planned well. The local officials had actu-

*—MISS BENNETT (*SM, SEPT.* 1965)

Under that one roof, that evening, were the representatives of "the old families" who were still able to maintain stables of thoroughbreds — and the others, the many others, whose lives and whose survival could depend on how the season went. But Miss Bennett was unconcerned with all this. She had her assignment. Only one man, among those present, must die ....

ally had far different plans for her job. It had been with the guiding hand of Antonio Ruz himself that she had been called in to execute the president-elect whom Ruz had somehow found he couldn't manipulate as he had the others.

One dictator, more or less did not matter in her scheme of things especially when she had no illusions whatever about Ruz who was famous for his methods of remaining in power. She smiled grimly as she recalled his face—that two seconds before he had begun to feel any pain—that unbelieving surprise.

Poetic justice?

The bad guy instead of the intended victim who was the good guy?

The one small voice she detested said to her: "You did it because of Flor Ruz. You wanted the daughter to have a happy ending. Not forced to marry Victor Mauro Fuentes.

All the changes rung up to *Hearts and Flowers* . . . and for a person she'd never spoken to, never known except by sight.

She rose abruptly and tuned the muted music louder, trying somehow to down out the thought she knew was sure to follow. She pressed her eyes to blot out the picture of the sensless unsolved murder of her own daughter.

If she let herself go like this, her working days would be numbered, and of course, that wouldn't matter much either. Nothing really mattered anymore.

The phone rang. She took the receiver off the hook and simply listened.

"Only me," a masculine voice said.

"Yes?"

"Missed, I saw by the papers."

"Yes."

"First time for you."

"Right."

"Ready again?"

"Yes."

As she spoke she examined her makeup in the mirror facing her. Who would know she was thirty-six. And if they knew, what would it matter since she was capable of being anything from a fourteen-year old to a crone in the marketplace of Cairo, both of which she had successfully brought off thanks to the advanced art of make-up. Few knew that a deadly calculating brain rested beneath the Mr. Laurence coiffure or that in both of her well manicured hands there rested muscles capable of perfect aim.

It came three days later the usual way, through the mail. She opened a copy of Vogue Magazine and there on Page 19 she found the hand-printed address under the picture and caption of the latest fashion fad for the season. A model wore red shoes, red stockings, a red dress (a variation of the shift she noted) but cut considerably above the knee. The model also wore thickly pencilled pink eyebrows and pink mascara.

After a glance at the address below, she studied the picture more carefully. "Well, well, well," she said.

Strange sort of address she reflected later as she prepared for bed. She cold-creamed her face, automatically g i v i n g more attention to her throat. The music lulled her senses and she slipped into a double sheath of cream lace and sank back among the stacked pillows.

What was it the man had told her on her last job—the cocoon she wove for herself? That she was already dead? Using luxury like chloroform. Silly man. Miffed because she'd knocked him out of the presidency by killing Ruz.

Finally, however, as in so many other instances, she was able to put these unpleasant thoughts completely out of her mind. Though ensconced against three down pillows and accoutred by the rose satin down comfort over the flowered sheets she preferred, she was already slipping into the discipline of her new job. The remnants of what had happened in Brisena and the details of her entire past were now being inexorably pushed into a vast limbo. She began concentrating again on the job in hand. The address was well memorized, and she had destroyed the page from the magazine.

Strange address. Again she brought it to the threshold of her consciousness after she had taken her pill and was being softly stereo-ed into slumber.

SPUYTEN DUYVIL
SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y.

It was a bistro after all. The name was the Dutch for, "In spite of the Devil." And tonight it was filled with the elite of the racing world at the height of the August season. Had a bomb dropped on it that night of August 6th, it would have destroyed a major proportion of the latest generations of families reaching as far back in American history as it was possible to go. These were not the aficionados, the fans, the bettors. These were those who main-

tained stables of thoroughbreds together with the consignors who had come with their new crop of yearlings to auction off at Fasig-Tipton, the most famous and the oldest horse auction company in the country. Spuyten Duyvil and its patio was surrounded by the Fasig-Tipton property with the auction ring next door to it. Only a thin wire fence was between the two properties.

Tonight there was a subdued sort of bedlam evident —a state which was apparently the normal climate of the place. In the flower filled patio the tables were filled with groups who did most of their bidding at the Sales Ring next door by some slight of hand which the uninitiated could never understand. Now, the auctioneer, Milton Dance was entoning. . . . "and now, moneee, moneee, fifty, do I hear fifty-one . . . moneemonee gimmie fifty-one... thank you. Do I hear fifty-two? Moneemonee-ala-ala fifty-two?..."

This jargon was interrupted by the voice of a benign white-haired man who came to the microphone. It was Humphrey Finney, president of the company.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he exhorted with tears in his voice, I beg you to consider the blood of this extraordinary colt. This is breeding at its very best! This gray colt is by Native Dancer, sire of many stakes winners including Hula Dancer, Good Move, Dan Cupid, Raise-a-Native and so forth. It's a half brother to winners, Greek Chief, King Neptune, and Marathon. Out of Greek Bland who was half sister to winners Light Count, Bushy Blonde, Magic Empire and so forth. I urge you not to let this bargain go, Ladies and Gentlemen."

The bidding proceeded more vigorously finally ending at seventy-five thousand dollars.

Miss Bennett had been sitting alone at a table near the wire fence watching the proceedings with interest and giving an eye to the highly strung yearlings being walked around a show area under the strong lights before they arrived in their logical order to the Sales Ring. Yet in spite of her interest, she was alert to her Saratoga contact whom, naturally she did not know; she only knew he would approach her before the night was over.

A pleasant stranger came up to her table. She was aware of a true Virginia accent, the perfect set of the white dinner jacket and a de-

vastating smile.

"Mind if I join you, ma'am?"

"Of course not," she answered. After all, it just might be her contact.

He summoned a waiter and, ascertaining her drink, he doubled the order. Neither of them knew the waiter had a seventeenth century s h o w house in nearby Greenwich, N.Y. and was working the week there so he could buy a small piece of authentic bric-a-brac he had set his heart on.

"I love this place," the stranger said expansively.

"The whole operation is really interesting," she answered.

"Yup. All that moola for a horse that's only a year old. Only bloodlines count here."

"I see."

"Yes sir, only bloodlines. Now honey, just what're you doing here alone? Don't you know some bad mans might pick you up—somebody like me?"

"What a way to go," she parried, frankly evaluating his engaging features. By the strong lines she could easily sum him up—blond, around thirty-six, and obviously good company for even an exigent female.

"Yes, Honey, I don't mind telling you I just got my third divorce finalized last week, and I'm a free man this season! Had to settle one of m' farms on this one, but Hell! Ain't no use complainin'. I got four or five more left."

"Farms?"

"Thoroughbreds, H o n e y. Thoroughbreds. I'm one of th' Franklins of Virginia an' all that mess. All us Virginians breed the best horses in the country. Hell, Honey, ain't nothing in this square block tonight but Virginians an' Kaintuckians! Plus the Whitneys and Vanderbilts etcetera."

"Do tell," she answered, slipping unconsciously into his accent. "You're selling your horses tonight?"

"No, Honey, tomorrow night's my night. Wish me luck."

"I do."

Time was passing, and she found herself being tied up with engagements for dinner at the local gourmet places and for breakfast at the track at the unearthly hour of six-thirty. She began to get restive for her contact. It was just possible that Mr. Shelby Franklin, otherwise known as "Honeychile" was delaying the approach.

"I'm going to wander inside a moment and listen to the piano," she finally said rising.

"Honey, it's hard to get a

seat inside there tonight, and it's much cooler out here. Tell you what—if you do get a seat, save me one beside it, and after I go over to check my stables, I'll join you."

"All right. I'll be seeing you then."

"You bet you will, Honey."

He was right. There were no available tables inside, but she luckily found a place at the bar where she discovered the quickest way to be served was to order a simple scotch and water.

"When did you get in?" he asked.

Suddenly she knew. There was that subtle difference about him which, although he was impeccably dressed, proclaimed him not of the horse people.

"Tonight." she answered.

"I noticed the gardenia." he said.

They were the catchwords —the small gardenia clipped to her evening bag was all but unnoticeable to any but the one looking for it.

The noise of the bar included many conversations pitched above the music. With the right tone, one could talk privately.

"I like gardenias." she said, giving him the matching answer.

"Look. There's a party sitting at that big table behind us. The man sitting directly under the painting is Cholly Knickerbocker. The one to the right of him. That's your man. Take a good look."

She looked through the bar mirror and allowed for the reverse picture.

"Do I get a cover if I need one?" she asked.

"Why, of course. When you pick your time, you can let me know. Just try to leave word in your own box at the hotel. You'll get his schedule tomorrow." he said sliding from the bar stool and with no effort disappearing into the crowd.

Shelby Franklin planned to break through the self possession of that new tomato if it was the last thing he did. He was not called "Honeychile" for naught and was not entirely unaware of his charm. He set this goal for himself in spite of a half million dollars worth of horseflesh to be sold that night at auction, a staff of fifteen stable boys to contend with (a few had hit the bottle early upon arrival) and his latest ex-wife, who, dressed to the teeth, was flaunting herself around the same places they had gone last year trying to spoil his fun at Saratoga this year. He had even heard she'd put out the word that

some of his yearlings weren't s o u n d. He'd gotten that straightened out right away with young John Finney and Lou Doherty, the former the General Manager and the latter on the Board of Directors of Fasig Tipton.

In the meanwhile, there was this new tomato to investigate. That something about her he couldn't fathom intrigued him. So at six the next morning, rather late for him to rise, he dressed in his daytime clothes of tailored khakis and with glib facile stories of his baby sister oversleeping plus two twenty-dollar bills to the room clerk and a maid, he sallied into Miss Bennett's room and pulled an astonished lady from her flowered sheets and down comforter. Exactly one half hour later she was groggily eating breakfast at the track and later watching the workouts of some of the most affluent and beautiful horses in the world.

Honeychile seemed to show absolutely no effects of the previous evening's drinking.

"Hell, Honey," he told her when she remarked upon it, "in this game if a man cain't hold his liquor or forget it by five the next morning, he's beat before he's started. Now watch—I got a couple of colts racing in this meet. Here they come now to exercise. Nothing but class, 'cause I always bring my best up here to Saratoga."

As she looked around at the huge elms, the array of flowers spilling from their boxes on the ledge of the grandstand, the white wrought-iron staircases and the lake of swans in the center of the infield, Miss Bennett recognized the true and the authentic. She understood the tradition and the hundred and m o r e years of the gentle and elegant aging the Saratoga track had undergone.

He continued, "There's a whole slew of p e o p l e who think the Kaintucky Derby is the oldest stake race in America—I've won many a bet on it . . . but actually the Travers Stakes up here is much older. This is the class in racing, Honey, and don't ever forget it."

He dropped her back at the hotel and arranged to pick her up at 1:00 P.M. for lunch at Spuyten Duyvil, a plan which suited her own purposes very well. For when she had arrived at her hotel the night before, she had found the schedule neatly printed by hand.

> He lives in the Reading Room next to the track. Spends most of his time in Spuyten Duyvil. Dines

at the Florian almost every night. Back to Spuyten Duyvil until after midnight. Then back to Reading Room. E a r l y mornings at the workouts at main track.

It was clear where she must spend much of her time to make the calculations which she and she alone would be responsible for. With the exception of her last job, she had never failed to deliver what she was highly trained and highly paid to do. Though she had been promised a cover, still she herself might not know the exact time she would strike. To all intents and purposes she was working completely alone—the plan which suited her best.

Thank God, she thought, that on this particular job, her contact had not made any gratuitous explanations. She never wanted to know the why or the instigator of her work. The only thing she asked was her target, and time enough to do the job efficiently. In this case, she knew she'd have only until the end of August to act—and this time there must be absolutely, but absolutely no deviation.

Few of the customers realized that the sole owner of Spuyten Duyvil was the lady in the green coverall who was usually in the daytime to be found in her kitchen. M o s t thought that Lou Dougherty and the famous California trainer, Charlie Whittingham owned it—a n a t u r a l mistake. This persistent rumor continued because at the very beginning of its shaky life, when there was only an old t w e n t y-record juke box, wooden stools at the bar (bought at auction from the Grand Union Hotel) and painted wooden tables on a bare plank wooden floor, Jane and Lou Doherty and Charlie Whittingham would come in, phone a r o u n d to the chic places in town to find out who was where, and demand that they come pronto to Spuyten Duyvil. Why dance to a swank orchestra by the Lake when they had a perfectly good juke box with twenty records in it they reasoned. They even tended bar when the spirit moved them since both were known as experts in stingers.

So now years later, Virginia had imperceptibly been converted into a reverse-reverse snob. It was generally known among the select that for a client to be eligible for one of her lunches, he'd have to first be on *her* list of Who's Who and apparently being a millionaire didn't count. She'd

been known to chase several out of her kitchen.

At night there appeared a Virginia with a different aspect. Dressed for the evening, keeping an eye on the help, the customers, the atmosphere, and a sharp ear on the music, she saw all, dominated all.

By day she kept the front entrance on George St. locked and only the initiated knew one had to use the back patio entrance. Occasionally a few of the newer stable owners wandered in, innocently expecting the type of service they had been accustomed to in New York, Paris or London. What a surprise for them to see scions of some "first" families serving themselves, making their drinks and writing out their own checks.

Jack Mann of *Sports Illustrated* once said that more business involving more millions was done at the one big table in the back of the place than at any other restaurant table in the world. Into this daytime atmosphere came Honeychile and Miss Bennett.

"Hi Frank," Lou Doherty greeted. "Doing yourself pretty well these days, I see," he glanced significantly at Miss Bennett. "Join us. I'll buy you a drink . . . Carole . . ."

Virginia's granddaughter who had been busy hanging her latest paintings came and took their orders. Miss Bennett was introduced to the group at the table and having long ago trained herself to take instant and fairly accurate impressions, she now catalogued each one.

Vick Travers: big, spoiled, puffy face from constant drinking. His horse, Lovely Venice had won the big Florida stake the previous winter. Was racing four or five horses in the Saratoga meet.

Big Jim Wiley: the original Virginian. Good-looking, good natured, six-five and two-twenty. Rarely seen without a felt hat pushed back at a precise angle. It was rumored once that he had gone around incognito all day when he appeared without his hat. Had brought up thirty yearlings from his Middleburg farm to sell.

L. Clay Camp: Another big consignor. Often kept everyone in stitches with a matchless sense of humor. His *bon mots* were always presented in an accent which people swore that Andy Griffith copied from him. Rarely seen without his pretty wife who knew as much about horses as any horseman in Saratoga.

"Catfish" Jones, ex-football star, many times a millionaire with yearlings from his farm

to sell and twenty horses racing in the meet.

Robbie Scallie, veddy British in spite of his many years of horse breeding in Kentucky. Small, careful and with the reputation of being the cheapest millionaire in the world. Though often kidded about his parsimony, he still never picked up a check if he could help it. The waiters avoided him if they could get away with it.

Lou Doherty, owner of a stud farm in Kentucky with horses racing in the meet. Tall, rarely smiling, he possessed a mordant wit which often devastated even a group already endowed with more than their share. Only he could tell "The Three Biggest Lies in the World," a now famous joke.

It was easy for Miss Bennett to realize that here was the annual meeting of a special elite of minds highly tuned in many fields, but especially the field of the thoroughbred horse. These minds were also world weary, disillusioned, sometimes bitter, now attuned only to the heady competition of racing and breeding winners.

She was also interested to note that among those present was her prey.

Camp was speaking. "Now I said to that sonova B. No use kiddin' me, cause I can close the deal in ten minutes with somebody else."

"And so you BS'd him out of fifty—thousand that is," Wiley surmised draining his Heinekin's beer.

They laughed. "Damn if you ain't right, C a m p grinned.

"You been buying any new stuff recently?" Vick Travers asked Catfish Jones. All there knew this was an oblique reference to the fact that Catfish had bought Lovely Venice from Vick somewhat over Vick's protest.

"Not any to speak of," Catfish answered amiably enough. I'm selling s o m e though. Wanna see any of my stock?"

At this moment Liz Whitley s t r o l l e d in dressed in d u n g a r e e s, fresh from watching her horses' workouts. She had a quick sandwich, chatted in the jargon understood only by horse people and breezed out the front door, driving her own Rolls which she had parked on George St.

The flurry she caused was not inconsiderable among the consignors since she had been known to pay as high as one hundred thousand dollars for a yearling which took her fancy. Rise and Fly had been an outstanding example.

"Well, I'm going home now and take it easy until tonight. I'll get to the Sales Ring early and come back here to sing my songs. I'm vocalist here now," Catfish Jones announced.

This was true of many of the customers who liked to try their own voices to Ida's piano, tipping her for the privilege.

"Well, thank God I won't be here to hear you," Robbie Scallie's clipped tones cut in.

"I thank God too," Catfish retorted, " 'cause you're not a damn thing but a wet blanket. You haven't got the joy of life in you, and if you did, you wouldn't know what to do about it."

Scallie had no reply over the laughter which followed.

Virginia's voice became audible from the nearby kitchen. As usual she was talking to her kitchen maid who apparently was paid to listen to her since Virginia herself did most of the work. "And so this Mr. Riley comes to me to ask me to get this lady a sandwich—*a sandwich* mind you, in my place right at the height of the yearling sales. The bar was three deep, mind you and the place was jammed to the gills. He had the nerve to tell me she was a millionaire. Ha! I told him very plainly, 'Listen, they're *all* millionaires here. She's no different!' "

"Virginia, quit that chattering and bring me my lunch," Cap yelled.

"Coming right out," she shouted back.

"Before I go, I'm going to make myself a woolly bear." Catfish Jones said.

He lifted his bulk and went behind the bar. "First one part kalua, then one part vodka on top of that, then one part bourbon on top of that, and don't mix it—let it stay in layers!"

"My God!" Honeychile shuddered as he watched him drink it.

The group gave a joint shudder with him. Jim Wiley spoke. "Just for the sake of the record, make me one too, he requested.

Catfish complied, pouring the liquor with a flourish.

"I like your friends, they're interesting to say the least."

They were at dinner at the Florian prior to going to Honeychile's sale that night.

"Well, I cain't say all of them are exactly friends, Honey," he said, "Here's the score. In this business, I reckon you know that although we sell and race horses for money, still that's not exactly the main aim."

"I gathered that," she answered.

"Yep, guess most of us

around here're more of less millionaires on paper anyway."

"I see."

"Main thing in this business, I guess is the prestige. Everybody wants to breed another Kelso or Carryback or a Native Dancer."

"I understand."

"Then the buyers want to flatter themselves they know enough to pick out the good stuff to bid on. They want to see their colors in front winning the Kentucky Derby or the Belmont or the Travers. These races naturally pay around a hundred thousand, give or take a little but it isn't the money, understand. As a matter of fact most everybody loses money on the stables yearly. It's just the fun of seeing your horse out there in front of your friends' horses. Your colors going under the wire first, get it?"

"I think so."

"You take Vick Travers now. He had "Lovely Venice" —well, Vick hasn't done too well recently. You see, he's also *betting* horses, and that's murder. But he's trying to keep up the family tradition and keep the colors going on the best tracks. Then Catfish Jones made him sell him his Lovely Venice for breeding purposes."

"***Made*** him?"

"Yeah. Offered him so much money he couldn't refuse."

"Oh."

"So Vick's a little mad about it. Been mad for months."

"But they were drinking together and talking . . ."

"Yeah, Cookie, but that doesn't mean a thing in this game. I'm pretty mad at one or two of those guys myself. Some raw deals have b e e n pulled, Honey, but it ain't no use complainin'. I'm liable to pull a fast one myself some day. Here, do taste this lobster. This is one of the best things to come from the North—try it."

After sampling the lobster she continued. "And Mr. Wiley and Mr. Camp?"

"Oh, they're *Virginians,*" he spoke as if that explained everything. Catfish Jones is from the *North!* and Robbie Skallie though Kaintuckian by choice—well *he's* from England really."

His tone seemed to imply another world.

"But I thought all the thoroughbreds originally c a m e from. . ."

"Oh, good horses, Doll, and actually my own people originally came from England. Second sons, but good blood, Gal. . .good blood. All this new stuff comin' over here

these days. . .well not all of it's got the blood. . .only the accent. No solidity."

She digested this with her excellent dinner and didn't mind being a little confused over human blood or horse blood that seemed to mean everything to Honeychile. She was making a few surmises. By now she was adept at assuming the right tone of interest on her well arranged features when she was actually turning over in her mind whether to use a gun or substitute some other means of elimination equally as efficacious. After all, even with a silencer, Spuyten Duyvil was rather small. This job could be difficult in such close quarters. Perhaps at the track early in the morning at the workouts? Yet, the heavy drinking at Spuyten Duyvil was a decided asset. She preferred her small twenty-two (it really seemed much more sporting) still there were times when she had to resort to other means of quick extinction.

"You're really a fascinating woman," he was saying, covering her hand with his. "Something strange about you, though. Something I just cain't seem to get through to."

She smiled at him. "Just keep trying," she said.

"Keep trying! Hell, Honey, you won't even tell me your first name!"

She smiled again. "My name is Heather," she said.

"Heather?" he considered this. "'Heather Bennett."

"Right."

"Well, Heather, doll, wish me luck." he raised his glass. "'cause I'm out to make a killing on my sale tonight."

They touched glasses.

Honeychile did very well. With only one of his yearlings alone going for $80,000, he was able to make the highest average so far in the four nights the sales had already run. He was jubilant, and later at Spuyten Duyvil, he was the center of the big back table presiding over the champagne and seeing that all glasses remained full. Among those who sat in to congratulate him were the companions of the morning, Robbie Scallie, Lou Doherty, Catfish Jones, Liz Whitley, Vick Travers, the Wileys and the Camps. Heather Bennett sat beside him, playing the part of current "friend."

It wasn't hard for her to to identify his lost wife who came up swathed in a sable stole. They kissed.

"H o n e y c h i l e, dahrlin,' you've done it again," she drawled looking hard at Miss Bennett.

"Yes, thank the Lord. You left me broke, Sandra, girl."

"Oh what's a few thousand between pals. You're a winner anyway. You topped them all tonight!"

"Yeah, but that's a year's money to support the farm."

"Don't break my heart," she laughed, "It's tough to live on five hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars a year. .

"But not all profit, Sandra—"

"Honey, hush!" she interrupted. "I'm goin' now, but congratulations."

When she had gone out of earshot, he turned to say to the table in general.... "That bitch sure got her hooks into me. I tell you boys, watch those wedding bells."

"Just watch it, period," Vick Travers retorted, "If it isn't ex-wives and alimony, then it's your good friends who do you out of your best horses." He cast a glance at Catfish Jones.

"I paid you fair and square for 'Lovely Venice.' You didn't have to sell him if you didn't want to." Catfish growled.

"Yeah. Refused me a loan; saw to it that the bank did, and offered me all that money. You knew I'd have to accept!"

"Oh, Hell, here we go," Catfish sighed.

Maybe she could do it now, Heather Bennett was thinking as she seemed to listen to the table chatter. The buzz of the general pandemonium and the constant pop of the champagne bottles which were being opened gave a perfect camouflage for her silencer. With her prey not two feet from her, completely unaware that he was attending his last celebration, it would be easy. A clean job as usual in the spot least likely to show much blood but most likely to kill instantly. It was almost mathematical. She had had one glass of champagne, not enough to dull her reflexes. She only hoped she wouldn't have to dispense with her tiny jeweled twenty-two. She had had so much trouble having it set with exactly the design she wanted in sapphires—her birthstone. Of course it was risky, but with her usual precautions and her invaluable experience. . . .

When Catfish Jones keeled over five minutes later there was a general surprise because nobody had ever seen him really "out." There was badinage about too many "woolly bears" and so forth, and for a while, his head even rested peacefully upon Honeychile's shoulder. Virginia's sharp eye noticed him, but since he was one of her favored clients (she liked his singing) she permitted him

to doze there, a thing she would never have tolerated with a new customer or an old one not one of her pets. In that atmosphere of gaiety, death seemed far off except to the one who had inflicted it and to the one to whom it had come so suddenly.

Catfish was carried to the nearby Reading Room by two obliging waiters who put him in the hands of Otis Bugg. The staff had a job to get his uncooperating body to bed. It wouldn't be until the next morning that he would be discovered dead by one of the chambermaids of the place.

Back at her hotel at last, Miss Bennett sat first in the satin boudoir chair and sipped a glass of her special brandy. And her thoughts were long long thoughts. She had long ago trained her nerves, her muscles, her curiosity and her various small weaknesses which she knew could interfere with some part of her work. Yet, here was something apart. She had felt exactly as an omnipotent cat with an unsuspecting mouse—not that Catfish could in any sense be likened to a mouse. She had been ready for the kill, and somebody had snatched the prey out of her reach. Secure in her bag was her twenty-two, unfired, still cold in its sapphire studding.

Her professional eye had told her he was dead. She knew it by the look of him, by the way his feet dragged as they carried him away, by the special slump of his shoulders. What had happened? Then what would she do about her not insignificant fee? Should she take it for work she didn't do? Had there been a competitor? The m o n e y would be in the bathrobe pocket in the closet of her New York apartment when she returned. But this was a new turn in a job which for several years had been rich in new turns.

She switched on her music and took another brandy before preparing for bed. After all, what if she should do all this worrying and it would be discovered he'd had a heart attack. Better to get a good night's sleep. She selected something Monsieur Christophe had run up for her. It was yards of lilac chiffon controlled by a scoop neck of hand tatting and caught at the waist by a deeper toned ribbon of tatting. It raised her morale and helped clear her mind. She slept well.

The press played it big, for after all, Catfish Jones was none other than Herbert Twomblay Jones the third, millionaire sportsman, and

many other things including All-American football star of former years for one of the Ivy League colleges.

Within hours, it became known that he had died of natural causes . . . if acute intoxication could be called natural causes. There was a rather pat medical term for it which sounded better in the papers. The content of alcohol in the blood seemed unnaturally high to Heather Bennett when she read the report of the autopsy.

But why should she care? The job had been done for her . . . all she needed to do was to return to New York and await her next one. There had not even been the usual danger attendant in her work. She had a slight sense of letdown. And why did her mind keep saying what a big man he was—how accustomed to alcohol he was. It also had been established that he had eaten well the entire day—why that abnormal alcohol content?

She conjured up the exact picture of the table that night. It was now a perfect racing afternoon of the following week and she sat with Honeychile in his box at the track watching one of his horses win. Yet superimposed over that moment was the picture of the table.

There had been in consecutive order, beginning from the head of the oval (not round) table, Lou Doherty, L. Clay Camp and his wife, Vick Travers, Robbie Scallie, then Catfish Jones, then Honeychile, then Liz Whitley who had for a while sat between her and Honeychile. Then on the other side of her came Jim Wiley, then Mrs. Wiley, then of course, there were at least thirty people who had approached the table to congratulate Honeychile. And yet, as she now counted her winning tickets on Honeychile's horse, she mused that in real life, the most likely person to have done what she now strongly suspected was done, would be the person who had the best opportunity to do it. Of course there was also motive. But first things first.

When she returned to her hotel that night, she broke one of her long-standing rules and wrote a brief letter.

And now there were only two more days left of the racing season in Saratoga Springs. Yet, those two days will never be forgotten in the history of that rather special community. They are still spoken of with the frequency of the time Upset beat Man-of-War. Willie Knapp of course, rode Upset.

So on the day before the

last day of the season, Robbie Scallie was taken into custody and accused formally of the murder of Catfish Jones. And what is more—the local police were given all the credit for breaking the case wide open. It was a case all had believed was closed.

It hadn't taken much time to find the "green" rum on Scallie's Kentucky farm. Actually it was pure white in color, but so called because it was concentrated enough to kill without careful dilution. To save money, Scallie had long used this rum which he got directly from Jamaica, diluting it to his needs. From there the road had been all downhill for the police.

It was he who had sat next to Jones the night of his death. On the other side had sat Honeychile. More d e a l s had come to light where Jones had invariably gotten the better of Scallie. Also many remembered Jones' threat to throw him out of a window on an occasion two years ago over some trifling incident. Scallie, a small man had not answered, but had not forgotten.

Doherty's testimony had carried weight. "I for once wasn't drinking because I had to take antibiotics for a summer cold," he had told the police upon questioning. "Yes, I saw Scallie ask Catfish to try the variation of the woolly bear."

"That bear must have been too woolly," the detective had answered. "We figure that's when he got it . . . all concentrated, and along with what he'd already had. . . ."

Scallie's lawyers took over and privately despaired when Liz Whitley suddenly remembered she had seen him pour something from a small bottle into his own glass before he'd offered it to Jones. (Liz actually saw him add the kalua to the drink, yet her evidence was damning. He had previously taken care of the rum in the Men's Room.)

"I guess we weren't as drunk as we seemed," Honeychile said to Heather Bennett dazedly. To be frank, I hated Jones too. He was one of the people who was spoiling racing . . . had no sense of the sporting in spite of his family background. Acted like a pirate. I'll never forget that time he claimed my horse when he knew we had an unwritten law about that around here. I raced this little filly in a cheap claiming race and she won. I never dreamed Jones would claim her . . ." he trailed off still baffled.

Heather Bennett was also slightly dazed in view of the immediate dividends which

her letter to the authorities had yielded. First, she couldn't understand why she had felt it necessary to write the letter in the first place, and second, she never dreamed the Saratoga Police Department was so efficient. She knew that the person who would have had the best opportunity to poison Jones would be the one who had sat next to him for the most time. Thus she concentrated upon Scallie in her letter. Honeychile had sat next to him on the other side, but she had naturally not given this significance in view of her insight into his character and his general state of mind that night.

On the last night of the season, according to custom, there was a general leave-taking of friends in Spuyten Duyvil. Many wouldn't see each other until the following year even though they lived within the same city. It was exactly the same feeling as on shipboard. The romances that had flourished might or might not be continued; the engagements contracted might or might not culminate in marriage; the incipient divorces might mature or might not culminate at all. A lifetime in thirty days is fairly easy to visualize when every moment is intensely lived. Also there were always some who would never return.

Honeychile and Heather Bennett made a good entrance that night. The place was humming as usual with the regular group plus a higher-keyed tone of anguished farewells to Virginia who often cried at this time. It was with a little difficulty that Heather Bennett kept a smug expression from her perfectly made-up face. She wanted no part of the triumph of Justice one way or the other having long ago been embittered beyond help. And yet there was something to be said for the vindication of one's hunch. Her quick eye now caught the face of her contact in the mirror. She had never thought to see him again. Though he never looked at her, she well knew he wanted to speak to her.

It was an easy matter as Honeychile soon went up to the piano to join in some group singing. She, still holding her brandy and inclining her head as if to be able to hear him better, casually strolled over to the bar.

"That's a switch!" the man said to her. But he said it as though he were speaking of a change in brands of liqueurs.

"Switch?" she repeated very casually.

"Managed to pin it on Scallie, eh?"

She smiled wisely, having long ago discovered that when in doubt, a knowing smile or a well placed murmur was invaluable.

"But I get a boot out of the other switch," he continued draining his glass and making signs of leaving.

"Like what?" she asked, sensing a thunderbolt.

"Well, not that it matters, but the job was paid for by that man over there singing —the one you've been going around with."

She kept her face straight and managed not to flinch. The man left.

"Another Courvoisier, please," she ordered.

She turned and stared at Honeychile as he went through the intricacies of his harmony. Not a bad effort. Fairly good voice. She warmed her brandy thoughtfully and got a brief flash of Catfish Jones sitting with three people wishing him death whereas she had thought of herself as the only Dark Angel. She decided to accept the money she would find in her bathrobe pocket. Those Paris creations did come high, and after all, she did deserve some recompense for her time.

Now Honeychile was raising his glass to her and she responded with new light in her eyes.

"A really nice girl," Shelby "Honeychile" Franklin thought as he made a passable middle "C". It was one of the few times he had found a tomato who could successfully resist his blandishments without making him mad. Sometimes, meeting a nice girl like that made one ashamed of all the dirty little involvements a man sometimes had to hook himself up with.

"I never did like that Scallie," Virginia's voice pierced the music. "Always asking for a 'pot of tea'. Now I ask you, how could anyone stand a man like that? Might have known he'd be a murderer."

the saint in modern art--iv

Drawings by JOSEPHINE SCREMIN AICHNER

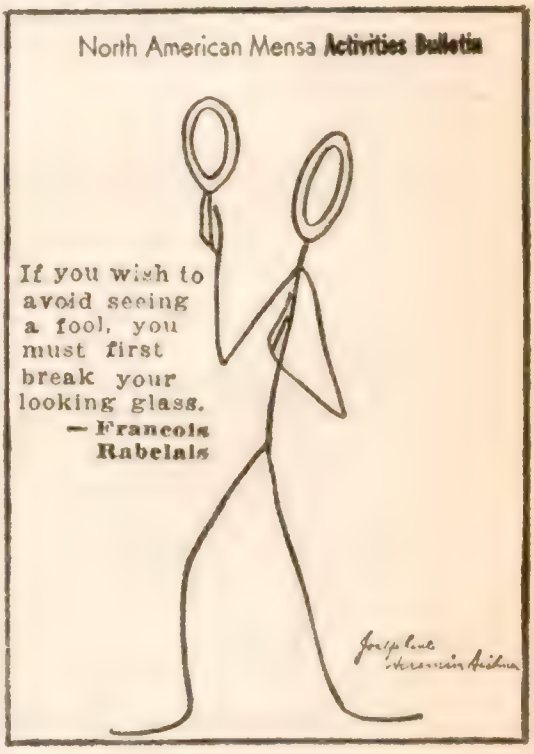
When I saw the cover of the North American Mensa *Activities Bulletin* for January, which is reproduced herewith, I did what is known in professional comedy as a double take. It looked for all the world as if someone had deliberately found a new and amusing pose for my trademark, with the Saint using his halo for a mirror. It seemed like a very cute and complimentary way of welcoming me to the Society—except that I had not joined until after it was published. Therefore it had to be, at the very least, clairvoyance or ESP.

As soon as I had recovered from the first shock, I wrote to the artist, Josephine Scremin Aichner. She replied:

"Yes, I am familiar with the stick-figure trademark of the Saint, but I assure you that my drawing and the timing of its publication amount to no more than coincidence.

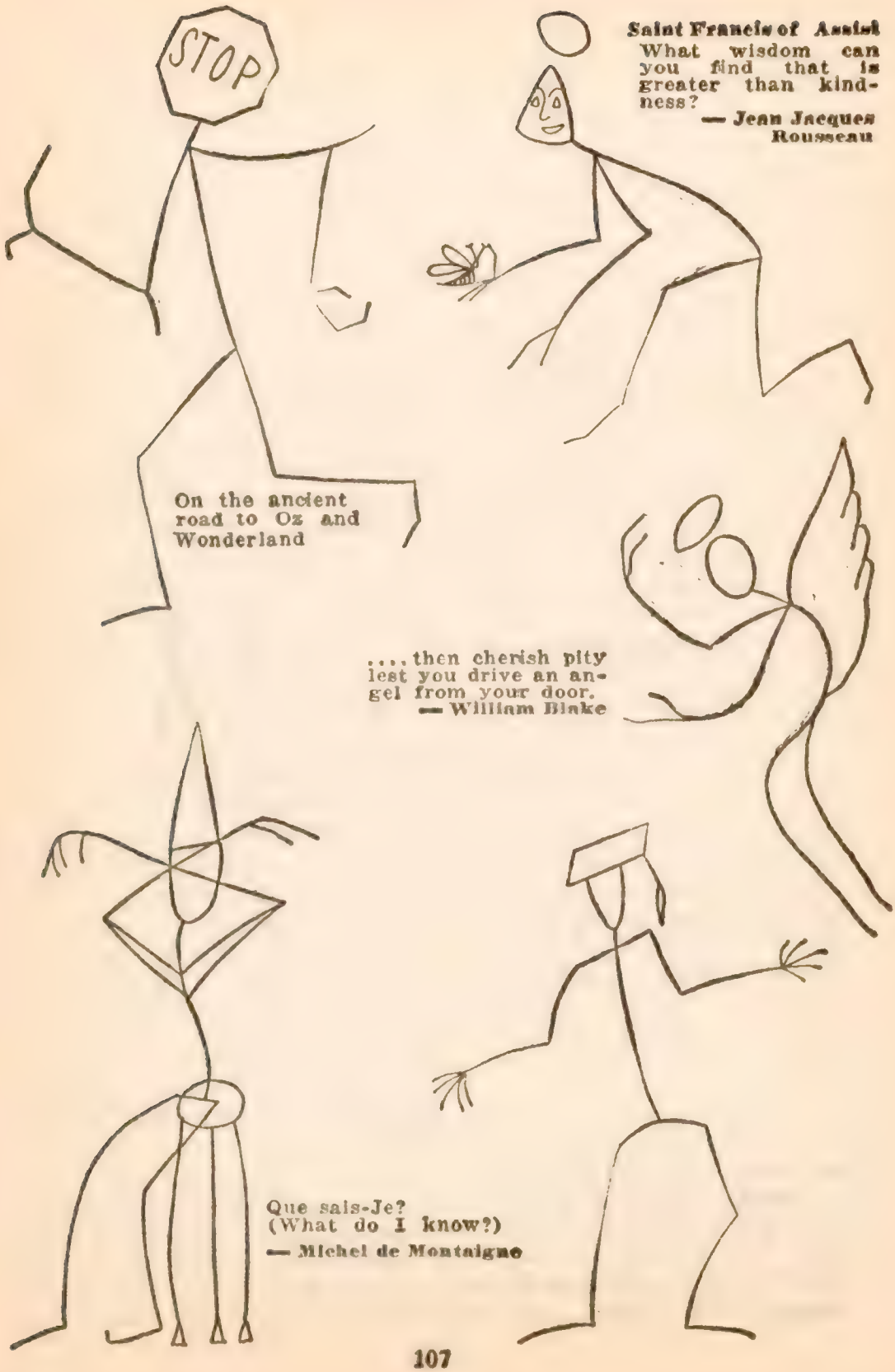
"I have long loved stick figures. They were Step I in my limited formal art education. Better-known and more highly acclaimed forms of art have always seemed cluttered, while the simple stick figures leave ample room for significance...

"The words came first. At Syracuse University, I found myself recording in notebooks phrases and parts of poems that especially appealed to me—fragments that helped construct a reasonable philosophy... Only later did the figures take form. My husband supplied an apt title: *Figures of Speech.*


North American Mensa Activities Bulletin
If you wish to avoid seeing a fool, you must first break your looking glass.
— Francois Rabelais

"...I had no extra copies of any of the other drawings—only my own collection. Hastily, I produced the enclosed ones....I thought you might enjoy seeing them anyway."

I enjoyed them so much that I have selected those which seemed most Saintly for publication on the following pages. Connoisseurs should find them interesting to add to a collection of versions of the Saint which we have published at various times, done by such distinguished artists as Jean Cocteau, John Paddy Carstairs, and Abner Dean. LC


STOP
Saint Francis of Assisi
What wisdom can you find that is greater than kindness?
— Jean Jacques Rousseau
On the ancient road to Oz and Wonderland
....then cherish pity lest you drive an angel from your door.
— William Blake
Que sais-Je?
(What do I know?)
— Michel de Montaigne

music to murder by

by Lawrence Treat

EVER since she'd been a child, a small, driven little girl with a talent, she'd aimed h e r s e l f at musical fame. She could play like an angel, her fingers knew. First piano, then banjo and mandolin and guitar and the whole range of plucked instruments—she'd mastered them all, culminating in the harp. And the keystone of her career had been her marriage to Philip Renwick, the distinguished conductor. She'd felt certain that he was destined to raise her to the heights.

In the two years since she'd been his wife, she'd worked hard, studying, learning, and she was about to displace Isabel van Eyck as the regular harpist. Edward Drujinsky and herself, Sonia Sard—there would be no other harpists in their class. She'd be his equal, and with Philip's help and his connections, she'd attain the fame that she deserved.

Philip Renwick had been murdered. She wondered when they'd question her, and whether they'd understand how she, more than anyone else, had had every reason to want him to live. They'd been a team — he the conductor, she the soloist. With him gone, this could mean the end —

She sat quietly on the veranda of the cottage overlooking the lake. It was the biggest of the cottages, with the best view, and it had been assigned to the Renwicks because he was the maestro, the drawing-card for the summer music festival. It was in full swing, and she was billed as the soloist for this evening. This was her chance for stardom, the critics were bound to recognize the greatness of her art. And now, Philip was dead.

She sat motionless, brooding and resentful. Thinking. Of herself and her tragedy.

She had no clear recollection of how she'd r e a c t e d when the police had broken the news to her. She'd been with Boris Mickle, they'd been swimming and they were lounging on the small beach of the lake, when the local policeman found them. She must have said something, gasped or cried out or gone into shock, but all she remembered was turning to Boris and saying that he'd have to conduct this evening, and that she intended to play as planned.

It was Boris who had asked for details, but the police officer knew merely that the strangled body of Maestro Philip Renwick had b e e n found in the small dressing room behind the outdoor stage where the orchestra performed, and that the state police were investigating.

Now, an hour or two later, she sat by herself on the screened-in porch of the cottage and gazed at the patch of lake visible through the trees. She was a small, graceful little thing with enormous black eyes and with a coil of black hair crowned with its own circlet of braids.

She wondered when they'd question her. They'd have to, and at length, because she was the widow and she had a world of information that the police would want. Besides, the widow was always suspect, and the police must have found out by now that she and Philip had had marital troubles. So the police would concentrate on her until they were convinced of her innocence, as they'd have to be. In the first place, how could anyone as tiny as she strangle a man as powerful as Philip? Furthermore, she had every reason to want him to live, for his decease was a death blow to her own career.

When she heard voices and the sound of steps in the living room, she tensed up. She turned slowly as a man in tan slacks and a fancy sport-shirt came out to the porch.

"Miss Sard?" he said, using

her professional name. "I'm Sergeant Eckhart, state police."

Sonia stared at him and said nothing. He looked like a young Kennedy, with small features and a shock of reddish hair. She wondered whether he was as young and naive as he appeared. She decided he was neither.

"Sorry to bother you," he said gently, "but I'd like to ask you a few questions."

She gave a barely perceptible nod and remained silent. She kept her hands clasped in her lap, with the palms turned down, underneath the blue bandanna. She kept squeezing her fingers nervously. Otherwise she was polished ivory, bloodless and white.

"Your husband had a rehearsal this morning," Eckhart said. "I understand that the performance will go on as scheduled, with Mr. Mickle conducting and with you playing the harp part. The *Liebestod*, isn't it?"

She answered in a low whisper. "Yes," she said.

"I spoke to some of the musicians. Mr. Renwick gave everybody a pretty rough time of it at the rehearsal this morning."

"He often does."

"He was so dissatisfied that he called another rehearsal for five this afternoon. Then he walked off in a fury, and you followed him to his private dressing room. What did you talk about in there?"

"We didn't talk," she said. "I went in to wash my hands. After playing the harp, one usually has to."

"Did you have a drink with him? Some ginger ale?"

"No."

"Okay," Eckhart said. "Then what?"

"Then I left. I came back to the cottage to change my clothes, and after that I walked to the village and got the car, which was being greased. I met Boris—Mr. Mickle, that is—and we went swimming. A policeman found us at the beach and told me what had happened."

"You know your husband's personal life pretty well. Who had a grudge against him? Who had a motive to kill him?"

She swallowed hard, and she answered cautiously. "Lots of people. He was hard on his orchestra, anyone of them would have killed him gladly after that rehearsal. Musicians are artists, they're emotional, they hated him this morning, but by afternoon they'd forgotten."

"He wasn't killed this afternoon. He was killed right after that rehearsal, and he

bore down pretty hard on you, didn't he?"

She tightened her lips and didn't answer. Eckhart said, "On you, and on Boris Mickle, who's due to conduct this evening. Renwick's death makes Boris the number-one conductor."

Sonia felt a pulse beat in her throat, and she reddened. "What do you want from me?" she demanded, with a rising note that she couldn't control. "Why don't you say what you mean? Why don't you ask me directly?"

"Ask you what?" Eckhart said smoothly.

"Whether I'm in love with Boris. I am, everybody in the orchestra knows it, but I wouldn't have left Philip for anything. I needed him for my career. He helped me, he made me, he was giving me my big chance tonight. And now—" She turned away and fought back the tears.

"Thanks," Eckhart said. "I was beginning to wonder about you."

"Wonder about what?"

"Whether you had feelings. Whether you were human."

"I'm human," she said. "Isabel's the one who isn't."

"Who is Isabel?"

"Isabel van Eyck. She used to be the first harpist before Philip put me in her place. She—she resents it, and she resents me. Terribly."

Eckhart made a notation on his pad. Sonia observed apologetically, "I really didn't intend to bother you with that. The orchestra is full of jealousies, with everybody trying to get ahead of everybody else."

"Did anyone want your husband out of the way?"

She shook her head quickly. "No. Boris wouldn't. I mean—" She broke off. "I don't want to talk about it, but I'd like to find out what really happened. All I know is that Philip is dead and that somebody strangled him. It's horrible. Tell me—what have you found out? If you want me to help, tell me."

"We found out quite a lot," Eckhart said. He crossed the porch and, with his back to her, he gazed out at the lake. "Nice view," he remarked. He turned around slowly and stared at the bandanna covering her hands. "When you left his dressing room," he said, "did you see anyone?"

She gave a slight shudder, as if the questioned probed too deeply and she couldn't bear to answer.

"What did you find out?" she asked.

Eckhart shrugged, and continued to study her. "After you left your husband," he said, "he apparently stacked

some records on the phonograph, three different versions of the *Liebestod*. Any idea why?"

"He liked to see how other conductors had done the piece," she said.

"Well, he opened a bottle of ginger ale and started to eat a honey bun, one of those sticky ones. He got the stuff smeared all over his fingers, and as a result we can reconstruct what he did. Those smears tell their story pretty well."

"Yes?" she said.

"He sat down in the Windsor chair, next to the phonograph. Then he poured a glass for someone else, presumably for the killer. The killer drank some of it. There was a fight, and in the course of it they knocked over a chair and a lamp, and swept that second glass to the floor and busted it. In three nice pieces. The killer left them there, and they have to have his fingerprints."

"Whose?" she demanded.

"We don't know yet, but the laboratory will find out. When you pick up a glass tumbler and drink from it, you usually leave pretty good prints. So, as soon as the lab dusts them and photographs, we'll fingerprint every possible suspect until we match up the right one."

"You may find my prints on the glass," she said.

Eckhart smiled. "Yes? Why?"

"Because I washed most of the glasses yesterday and put them on the shelf."

"I'll keep that in mind," Eckhart said. "Two sets. One will be yours, and the other—" He let his eyes drop to her hands. "What are you hiding them for?" he asked.

"They're ugly," she said with distaste. "They've been bleeding and my fingers are torn from plucking the harp strings this morning. Philip made me go over and over the same passages."

"Then if you'd held the glass, it would have blood on it, wouldn't it?"

"Probably," she said.

"No blood that I noticed." He took a small, cardboard square he'd brought with him and held it out for her. "Would you press your fingers on this?" he asked.

She removed the bandanna and held up her hands. Her fingers were covered with ointment, and she pressed them firmly on the surface of the paper. He took it from her and examined it.

"Thanks," he said. "Couldn't be clearer." He put the sample in its protective casing. "When you decide to tell me whom you noticed af-

ter leaving your husband, let me know, will you?"

She drew in her breath as she realized the significance of Eckhart's words. If there were no prints on the pieces of glass he'd found in the dressing room—and she had a feeling that he'd exaggerated their importance and overstated his certainty of finding them — if there were no prints, then naming the name of whomever she picked would be tantamount to a murder charge. She could accuse anyone she chose, provided he—or she—had no alibi.

Isabel?

She heard Eckhart leave. She replaced her hands in her lap, slipped them under the bandana and leaned b a c k. Thinking, brooding, wondering. Waiting for Boris.

He arrived at six o'clock. He was a big, burly man, but he walked lightly, with delicacy, and his voice was a soft tenor.

"Sonia," he said, "how are you?"

She shrugged. "I'm all right, I guess."

"I understand the police were here. What did you tell them?"

"The truth. What else?"

The chaise next to her sagged and creaked under Boris's weight as he sat down. "I've been having a hell of a time," he said. "This Eckhart really poured it on. He knows all about that argument I had with Phil yesterday, knows it was about you and that I threatened Phil. I guess the only reason Eckhart hasn't arrested me is because he didn't find my prints on that broken glass. That seems to bother him."

"Whose did he find?" she asked.

"I don't know. He didn't say."

She leaned forward tensely, and she spoke with sharpness. "Boris, after the rehearsal you stayed near Phil's d r e s s i n g room, you saw whoever was near the door, didn't you?"

"I wasn't noticing. I think Wingaard was there. And maybe Isabel."

"Isabel?" Sonia said shrilly. "What did she do? Did she touch my harp? Did she go onto the stage?"

"I tell you, I didn't notice. I was sore at the way Philip criticized you at the rehearsal. I was thinking it over and trying to figure out what he had in mind. Whether it was your type of playing, your interpretation or—"

"I'll interpret it the way I please," she said tartly, "and nobody can change my style." She stopped abruptly. "Boris,

when I play this evening, I'll do it the same way I did it at the rehearsal. It's *my* way. I can't change, can I?"

"I guess not," he said wearily. "I'll slow up the orchestra tonight. Don't worry, you'll come through it all right."

"Of course I will," she said. "Why wouldn't I?"

Boris stood up. "Take it easy," he said. "I was hoping you could bail me out of this fix, but—you're perfectly right. Just tell them the truth."

"Boris," she said suddenly, "tell Isabel I want to see her."

"Isabel?" he said in surprise. "What for? You don't get along with her, this is no time to upset yourself."

"I want to see her. There's something I have to find out."

He shrugged. "Okay," he said. "I'll tell her."

He left dispiritedly, his step was heavier than when he'd come in, and his shoulders sagged.

Sonia stayed in her chair. The trouble with Boris was that he was too acceptive, he lacked the drive and force that had given Philip his style. Because, if Philip was merciless, he nevertheless could whip his orchestra into a single unit. He mastered them and imposed his will on everybody. Except on herself, Sonia.

She waited quietly until she heard someone come in and heard Isabel's voice call out. "Sonia? Are you out there?"

"On the porch," Sonia answered.

She stood up when Isabel arrived, tall and blond and towering. Isabel's chiffon scarf, a frail, lavender thing, was draped around her neck. She halted in the doorway, and her strong, chiseled features softened. "I'm sorry," she said. "Sonia, I'm terribly sorry."

"About what?"

"About Philip, of course. It was terrible."

"Please don't p r e t e n d you're sorry, when I know you're not."

"But—I don't quite understand. We've had our differences, but this isn't the time to talk about them."

Sonia got up and faced Isabel. "Isabel," Sonia said flatly, "did you kill him?"

Isabel stepped back in shock. "I think you're mad. Why would I—how could I—"

"Y o u haven't answered me," Sonia said. "Did you kill him?"

Isabel frowned and licked her lips. "No," she said nervously. "Why would I do anything like that?"

"Because I'm playing tonight, he chose me, and you don't want me to have my chance."

Isabel seemed to regain control of herself, and she spoke coldly. "I don't want you to play, and I don't think you should. You're in no condition to, and you weren't up to it at the rehearsal, either. Everybody knows that."

"You're lying," Sonia said angrily. "You want to cut me out because you're afraid I'll take away your job."

"That's ridiculous," Isabel said. "I'm a better musician than you are or ever will be. And after this morning, I was waiting for a message from Philip asking me to play instead of you."

"You!" Sonia exclaimed. "You're a run-of-the-mill, second rate harpist with no flare and no talent and no—" Then, without warning, Sonia struck out and reached up at Isabel. Isabel jerked away, but Sonia grabbed her scarf. Isabel, trying to protect herself, wrenched free. The scarf tore, and she was still holding a piece of it when she fled.

Sonia gasped, stared at the remnant in her hand. She began to shake violently, and she sat down. After a while she went into the living room and poured herself a glass of sherry. It calmed her, and she walked over to the phone and picked it up. She asked for the police, and after a long delay she located Eckhart.

"Miss Sard," he said. "You wanted something?"

"Yes. About the prints on the glass—did you find any?"

Eckhart grunted. "Funny thing—I thought the case would be simple, that I'd just match up the prints."

"Well, can't you?"

"Miss Sard, there were no prints," Eckhart said, and he hung up.

She put the phone down slowly and wondered what that statement implied. She was in a daze, unable to concentrate or to move. She had something to do, but she wasn't sure what it was and she was unable to think with clarity.

She skipped dinner, and around six she started dressing for her performance. When she was ready, she left the house and found herself walking in the direction of the concert stage. She was early, she had no reason for arriving there so soon and she wondered why she'd come ahead of time, until she found herself standing at the door of Phil's dressing room. Then she knew.

She went inside. From her handbag she took the shred

of Isabel's scarf and stuffed it behind a cushion on the couch on which Philip's body had been found. Then she crossed the room and examined the phonograph. The records were still on the platter, and she raised them to a playing position and switched them on, loud. She waited until she saw someone approaching from the outside. As soon as she did, she bent down and began to search the room, but she swung around when Eckhart entered. He stalked over to the phonograph and turned it low.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

She climbed to her feet. "I'm trying to find out who killed my husband," she said.

"Any progress?"

"I don't know, but I think you bungled everything. You think Boris did it, but you're wrong. He wouldn't kill anybody."

"I'll agree with that."

"I don't think you even searched the room. What if the murderer left a clue that you overlooked?"

"Think he did?"

"Maybe it was a *she*, maybe it was Isabel. Did you question her?"

"Naturally," Eckhart said.

"She came to my cottage this afternoon, and we had a fight."

"What about?"

"She accused me of killing my husband, and I got angry. Why would I harm him?"

"I've asked myself the same question."

"Isabel saw him after the rehearsal, she admitted that much to me. Did *you* find that out?"

"What we found out from her was how strong a harpist's hands are. You and Isabel—your hands are unbelievably strong. Once you got a grip, nothing could loosen it."

"Did you know that her scarf is torn?" Sonia said. "If I showed you a piece of it here in this room and said I'd found it, while she said I tore it off her and put it here, whom would you believe?"

"Miss Sard," Eckhart said, "I believe in fingerprints."

"Then you *did* find some. Whose?"

"Let's put it this way," he said, refusing to answer her question. "Harp playing is pretty rough on the fingers, and most harpists put ointment on, after playing. You use polymixin, don't you? And then you put pads on, to protect your fingers. So if you held a glass, there wouldn't be a print or even a smudge on it, would there? You see,

the absence of fingerprints can be as important as their presence."

"But why on earth would I kill my husband?" she asked. "I needed him, he was going to make me famous."

"He was through with you. You were in love with someone else, and he was dissatisfied with your performance at the rehearsal this morning. He expected Isabel to take over the harp part."

"That's a lie!" Sonia exclaimed.

"He wrote Isabel a note, asking her to play."

"He couldn't have. He—" Sonia stopped abruptly.

"How do you know that?"

"Stop questioning me!" she shrieked. "Stop it—stop it—I—"

"What's the trouble? Afraid I found out that your husband changed his mind about you and called you second-rate? Because he did, people heard him, they—"

"No!" she screamed. "That's a lie—I'm good—I'm better than Isabel—and I'm going to play tonight and nobody can stop me and—"

She swayed and the room seemed to spin. Then she flung herself forward with the same blind, ferocious rage with which she'd attacked Philip after she'd read his note saying that she was ruining the performance, that he wasn't letting her play tonight.

What Sonia said now, what she did, was in a driving, unconscious rage . . . *just like before.* But this time, instead of strangling a man, she found herself caught in a vise that held her helpless. When she came to her senses, she was aware only of the pain in her arm, and of Eckhart's staring at her and saying, "Better calm down, Miss Sard. Better stop fighting me and take it easy."

She glared at him. "What are you doing? You're hurting me."

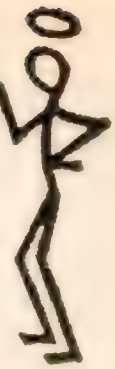
"Sorry. But I had to stop you from strangling me—the same way you strangled your husband."

Thought he had her, did he? "What in the world are you talking about?" she said.

"It had to be you. You were there, the last person to admit seeing him, but I wasn't sure until you told me he couldn't have written that note. If he wrote one—and I think he did—you'd have taken it, destroyed it when you killed him—and probably that's *why* you killed him. So you felt safe, you

(please turn to p. 135)

THE saint CROSSWORD



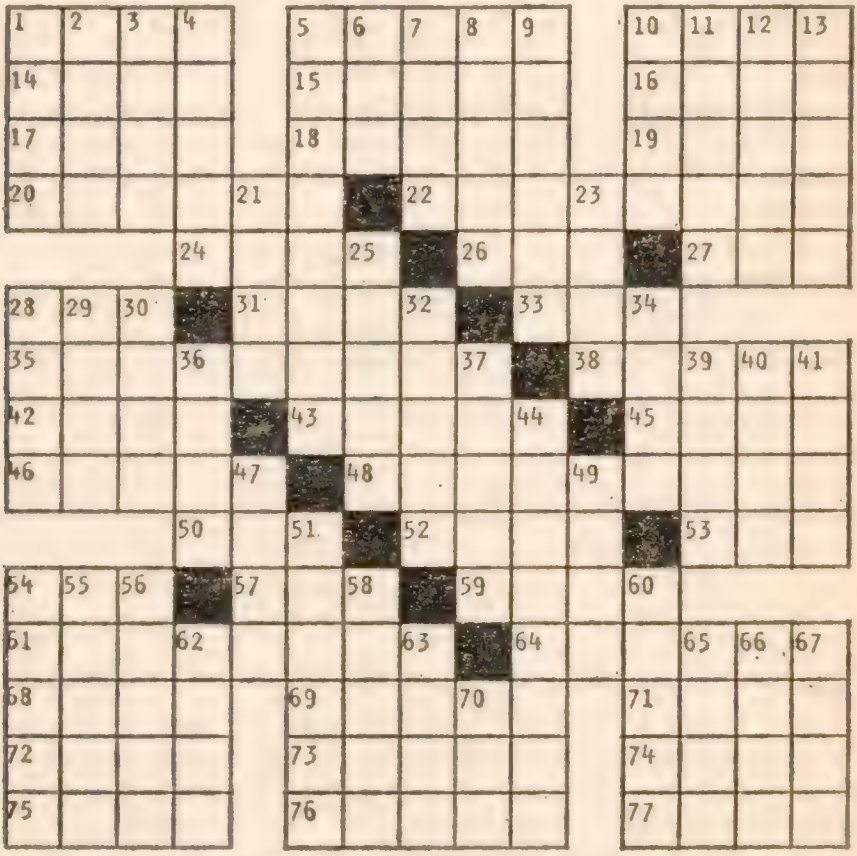
ACROSS

1. Teasing hooks fish
5. Glancing rather like an actress
10. One kind is Macrocystis
14. Flipped coin
15. Church-type window
16. Lamb in writing
17. Flows white and blue
18. Last Saint book
19. Legs
20. Weighty gift
22. Live alone like wood eaters
24. Honest but dull
26. Cheering cup
27. Makes jaw oriental
28. Could save an actor's entrance
31. Cheapest greenbacks
33. Shrunken haloes
35. Reduce guilt
38. Antiquated court
42. Factory in Turin
43. Tax dodge
45. Mental 38
46. Modern guitar technique
48. Playing hard to catch
50. Caught by cathode
52. Outside in Athens
53. 75 % Russian refusal
54. What an American Guinevere would have called her husband
57. Yiddish comedian's query
59. Single German woman
61. Most obvious flower for a garden
64. Heavy
68. Comply
69. Interfered with Florida city
71. Disorganized ceremony becomes an orderly row
72. Russian hemp
73. Upstanding
74. Candle-burning poetess
75. Its name doesn't mean the snake does it
76. French toast
77. Ina makes Greek wine

DOWN

1. Bardot's glove
2. Would make French badly feverish
3. Drunk by stag at eve
4. Swift armada
5. Obligation of serial
6. Long passe discotheque
7. Popularly gauche in Paris
8. A high C would hide game
9. Free-for-alls
10. French military beanie
11. Social cream
12. Pet drawing of 11
13. Any usage like 38
21. Divides fore from after
23. Printers' moulds
25. Permission

28. Umpires cut down to size
29. Shakespeare's out
30. Once led wise men
32. Custom might
34. Slick operator
36. Gendarme's holster
37. What schooling is intended to do
39. Suggests a port of thieves
40. Pass one to the other, and there is a difference
41. Danny boy
44. One letter would change an appraisal to summer sleep
47. Relocation
49. Bulwer-Lytton heroine
51. French duck town
54. Market for Socrates
55. Deadly bite
56. Pollster's warning
58. Dowager's headpiece
60. Thespian come in
62. Expiring colors
63. Ecclesiastical agreement
65. Militarily extended help
66. 100 Champagne bottles
67. Incompletely delete
70. Short ratio of 66



(Please turn to page 135 for the solution.)

NOTE:

If you don't agree with any of our definitions, we suggest that you get a new dictionary. We can't afford one, so we are writing our own. *L. C.*

backfire

by Philip Ketchum

THEY went to a party that night and Beth drank too much. She had been doing that lately, hitting the bottle. She had been doing that defiantly, aware that he disapproved. It was a challenge of his authority, and perhaps it was an attempt to draw his attention. She was unsatisfied with her life. He knew that. And he did not know what to do about it. He no longer loved her. He never had loved her very much. In his own analysis of himself he had decided he was not the kind of person who could ever love very deeply. Once, Beth had been a pleasant companion, the type he did not have to worry about. But now, and for a long time, she had been an annoyance. If he could have p u s h e d her into the past, that would have been delightful. If she could have walked out of his life, he w o u l d have been very pleased. Unfortunately, she would not agreeably move

Veteran novelist Philip Ketchum, a frequent SM contributor, returns with this story of the man who had determined on his course of action, and whose only problem, now, was how to implement his decision. How and when was not too important. But both of them had to die....

into the past, or walk out of his life. He was saddled with her, possibly for the rest of his life. That is, he was tied to her unless something happened to set him free. That might never happen.

They came in the house when they got home and he almost had to carry her in his arms. Her thoughts were confused. She staggered when she tried to walk. And she laughed loudly at her own drunken antics. Maybe she thought she was being funny. Oliver thought she was acting like a fool. He watched her sprawl on the davenport and wondered why he had ever married her—and what he should do now. He told himself, *I ought to get out of here, pack up and leave. I ought to do it tonight.*

But he knew that was only a notion, a wish, an idea. He could walk out, he could do it tonight, if he had the nerve —if he could have lived on nothing, if he could have thrown up his partnership with Mike Cartwright. But he could not live on nothing and it was foolish not to hang on to his partnership. They had their hands on a new plastic process which might pay millions. How could he turn his back on such a possibility?

Beth got up, staggered to the corridor, fell, and crawled toward her bedroom. Oliver watched her, scowling. A gentleman might have helped her to her feet but right now he did not feel like being a gentleman. Let her crawl! Why not?

She disappeared in the bedroom, then called him. "Oliver! Oliver, I need you."

He muttered under his breath. He decided to ignore her.

She called him again, her voice louder even though the words were thick and ran together. "Oliver! Oliver, needja, needja! Oliver."

He walked to her bedroom door, "What do you want?"

She was sitting on the bed, half undressed, and she looked at him and giggled. "You don't like me, do you?"

"I don't like alcoholics," Oliver said.

"So I'm an alcoholic."

"We'll talk in the morning," Oliver said.

"I want to talk tonight."

"No, tomorrow."

"I want a drink—a nightcap. Any alcoholic ought to be entitled to a nightcap."

She giggled again as she said that. Oliver turned away in disgust.

He walked to his own room, almost sure she would not bother him anymore tonight. She would get out of her

clothes, take a sleeping pill as a matter of habit, and pass out. She might sleep until noon tomorrow. She probably did not need the sleeping pill.

He suddenly frowned, aware of a hinting thought—an exciting thought. Maybe—just maybe, Beth would take more than one sleeping pill. People sometimes did take too many pills—people who had been drinking. A person would take one pill, and if it was not effective you might take another, or another, or, unaware of what you were doing, you might take several. Several—too many—and the next morning you might not wake up. Beth might do that, but he doubted it. He could not count on any such luck.

But if he could—if Beth took too many sleeping pills, that would be a real break. That was a way out for her—and for him.

He took a deep breath, started pacing the room, and he thought, *Why doesn't she! It has happened to others, it could happen to her. Too many sleeping pills—a natural and normal accident.*

He poured a stiff drink, walked to the bathroom which separated their rooms. In the medicine chest he found Beth's sleeping pills. She might have taken one, or she might have forgotten about them. He put the bottle of sleeping pills in his pocket and holding the drink he walked to Beth's room.

She was on her bed, in her nightgown, and she had fallen asleep with the lights on. But she was sound asleep. He awoke her, easily.

"Here is your drink," he told her. "And I brought your sleeping pills. Maybe you had better take a couple. You know you never sleep very well after you've been drinking."

She half sat up. "You brought me a drink! I can't believe it."

"Here it is," Oliver said. "And your pills."

She took the two pills, and a gulp of the whiskey. "A nightcap," she mumbled. "A good stiff nightcap."

"A good stiff drink," Oliver said. "And here are your two pills. They slipped out of your hand."

They had not slipped out of her hand. She had taken two pills, now she was taking two more.

She took another drink—and two more pills. That made six. And she sank back on the bed and closed her eyes.

Oliver waited a few minutes, then he awoke her, gave her more of the sleeping pills.

He did that again and again. Beth seemed unaware of what was happening. Oliver emptied the bottle, wiped it off, and put it in Beth's relaxed hand.

When he left her she was asleep on the bed, breathing heavily.

In the morning she was dead.

Oliver Preston seemed shocked at what had happened. He cried brokenly as he talked to the police. He seemed to bear up bravely in the presence of his business partner, Mike Cartwright. When he talked to Josie Cartwright, Mike's wife, he said very little. Mike patted him on the shoulder. The police asked him no questions. Josie was the only one who seemed curious.

"You must have loved her very much," she said quietly.

He shook his head. "No, not really. I was stunned—and I am sorry, but—"

"But what?"

"In a way, maybe it's for the best."

"You mean, you're free."

"Free? I don't know what you mean."

"I think you do," Josie said. "It's a wonderful thing—to be free."

Oliver looked at her, then he looked away. He was afraid they were getting into a dangerous area. Josie was beautiful, vivacious—and too young for her husband who was in his fifties. She was much nearer Oliver's age, thirty-six. She had glistening blond hair, wide, thoughtful eyes, tantalizing lips. And an interesting body. Oliver had been aware of that for a long time. He was not in love with her, nor was he near in love. At the same time she was a prize item and it might be enjoyable to find out what she was really like. Oliver did not think she was bound to Mike Cartwright and if he was right about that, there were several avenues to be explored which might be profitable. In the days ahead he would spend a little time on Josie. That might be worthwhile.

Their work at the lab was moving right along. Mike Cartwright, who was handling the promotion end of the business, was already in the process of setting up royalty contracts. The real money they expected was not far off. In three months, or six months at the most, they would be rolling in velvet. Their days of struggling were over.

"We are just about there," Mike said. "Nothing to do now but wait. You know what

we ought to do—get away for a few days—grab a short vacation. Or maybe you don't feel that way?"

"Sure I do," Oliver said. "Where do we go? New York? Broadway?"

"Nuts to New York," Mike said. "And nuts to Broadway. What's wrong with Maine? I thought you were a great hunter?"

"I used to be," Oliver said. "Deer! Are you thinking of a deer?"

"Deer. The kind with antlers."

"What about Josie?"

"She'd love it. Of course if you'd rather make it stag—"

"No. Bring her along," Oliver said. "I get along with her. When can we get away?"

"How about Friday?"

"Suits me. Do you know of a camp?"

"Several. I'll get on the telephone, make arrangements. Haven't said anything to Josie but I'm sure she'll want to go."

Oliver nodded. It ran through his mind suddenly that hunting was sometimes a dangerous sport. A man could get shot, accidentally. It happened every year, or at least, now and then you heard about a fatal accident. Foolish, regretful. If a man was careful—but on occasion a man did not use the proper safety measures. He would never make that m i s t a k e. Never.

That was not what was in his mind, however. He was thinking of something else. It embraced hunting, and the possibility of an accident, not to him but to Mike Cartwright. If he and Mike and Josie went hunting and if something happened to Mike—how would he feel? Would he be very much upset? He doubted it. Mike was all right, he supposed, but it would not hurt him a great deal if Mike ran into an accident, a serious accident, a fatal accident. He liked Mike, in a way, but to be very honest, he could get along without him. In fact it might do him a lot of good if Mike dropped out of the picture. He could take over the entire business. Run it, that is. Josie would get her share, as his widow—unless he could get rid of her, too.

He wondered, abruptly, if this had not been in his mind for a long time. Possibly it had. He and Mike were going to make a lot of money, but if they kept the firm in experimentation, a lot of the money would be drained off in new schemes. Taxes would take a lot. And what would be left to him would not amount to a great deal. If he took over the entire company

he should do much better.

"I think that's what I want, he told himself. *I don't need Mike anymore, and I don't need Josie, either. If something could happen on this hunting trip, something accidental but fatal to Mike and Josie, I could really go to town. No more worries, no more work. Yes, that's what I want.*

That night Oliver Preston took a long look at himself. He had disposed of Beth, almost without planning. The opportunity had presented itself and he had taken advantage of it. He had quietly and efficiently done what was necessary. There had been no unpleasantness. Beth had taken the sleeping pills without any argument. The police, the next day, had hardly questioned him. He had not been suspected for a moment.

Now, he was thinking of what he might do about Mike and Josie. They were going on a hunting trip, and sometimes on a hunting trip there was a fatal accident. If it could be arranged normally, why not? If something happened naturally, who would ever suspect him of having a hand in the tragedy? He had been very wise in the way he handled Beth, he had waited for the proper moment. If he could follow the same pattern during the hunting trip he would be fairly safe. What he needed to arrange was a n o r m a l accident typical to hunting, typical to the north woods.

Two men could go hunting, and by mistake, one c o u l d shoot the other. That had happened a number of times. He and Mike could go hunting, they could separate, and he could shoot Mike, call it an accident, and get by with it. But since they were partners in an enterprise he might be suspect. Besides, that did not include Josie. He needed a better scheme than this.

How about an accidental fall? What might serve—a cliff and a push. Or a rock slide? Or how about water? A river, rushing water, icy cold. Or what about a gun accident! A gun accident! He was suddenly excited. He knew about guns and he was clever with his hands. With almost no trouble at all he could turn a rifle into an exploding bomb. He could choke the barrel just above the chamber, and if he added to the explosive in the shell, when the rifle was fired, it, the rifle, would be shattered. It would be shattered as Mike held it to his cheek. He would never know what had happened to him. He would die almost instantly.

"Guns don't blow up very often," he said under his breath. "But it can happen that way—it's a natural accident. No one would ever think I had anything to do with it."

An accident such as this might not involve Josie, but it could, if she was near her husband. And it was a challenge to him to try to arrange the accident so she was near him. He could manage this, possibly, by getting Mike and Josie, together in a duck blind. Mike might want to go after deer, or moose, but he ought to be able to persuade them to go duck hunting. At least he could try.

He remembered Beth. He remembed how naturally she had died. He had not e v e n planned it, and he had never been suspected. If he was that careful with Mike and Josie he had nothing to worry about. He would get ready—and wait. He would get up his trap, but he would not do anything until circumstances were right.

They flew north Friday. Mike had three rifles. He packed them. Josie would use one, Oliver had his own rifle. They went to Brannagan's camp. It was deep in the woods, half a day over rough roads in a Jeep. Josie seemed tired when they got there. She went to bed right after supper. Mike stayed up, talking to Syd Acuff, who ran the camp and who would serve as guide. Oliver stayed up for a time, then went to bed. He thought about borrowing one of Mike's rifles, but shook his head. They would stay here a week, or maybe two weeks. There was no hurry in setting up the accident.

The next morning, early, they took a Jeep ride deeper into the woods, then separated. They were after deer, and they patterned the paths they would follow. Just before noon Oliver heard shots which he judged were Mike's. He was right. Mike was the first to get his deer. Oliver did not even see one. Nor did Josie. She was tired and scratched after the day's hunt and that night she meant to go to bed early, again. Mike wanted to sit up and boast and finish his bottle. Oliver went outside to look up at the stars—and think. He had not meant to see Josie but as he crossed toward his cabin, she called him from the shadows, then joined him.

"Thought you had gone to bed," Oliver said.

She shook her head. "I think I'm too tired to sleep. Whose idea was it, that we go primitive?"

"M i k e, I guess." He shrugged. "But I don't mind it. I used to like to go hunting."

"I wish I'd never come."

"If you'd seen a deer—"

"I did aim at something—something moving. It was across the creek and a little ahead of me. Mike! I almost pulled the trigger."

"But you saw him in time to hold back."

"No. I knew it was him. It was just an impulse to aim at him—then I wanted to pull the trigger. What do you think of me now?"

"I don't know," Oliver said slowly.

He was thinking as hard as he could. He was trying to understand her. He was amazed that she had said this much. He was almost afraid of what she might say next.

"I guess we get crazy notions, now and then," he said vaguely.

"It wasn't a crazy notion," Josie said. "I'm not going hunting tomorrow."

"Why not?"

"I might see Mike again over the sights of my rifle. Next time, I might pull the trigger."

A shiver ran down his back. "I don't think you would."

"But I might." She looked away. "What do you do when love dies? How can a person walk away from it if you don't have your own money. I'm tied to Mike through economic necessity. Now—that I've told you this, do you hate me."

Oliver scowled, but he shook his head. "No, I don't hate you."

"You should."

"No, I'm as bad as you." He hesitated, then spoke under his breath. "I wasn't sorry when Beth died. I had stopped loving her, long ago."

"You got away from her."

"Yes. By accident."

"That's what I need," Josie said. "An accident. But I won't be that lucky."

"I wish I knew how to help you," Oliver said, and he patted her shoulder. It was a friendly gesture, comforting. And that was all. A voice was screaming in his mind, it was screaming, *Use her! Use her! If she is tired of Mike, then help her get rid of him—and in the process, eliminate her. This is your big opportunity.*

Her voice came in a whisper. "At least, you are understanding. You don't hate me?"

"Of course not."

"What's going to happen to me?"

"I don't know."

"What about—Mike?"

"I don't know."

"You don't really like him,

do you?"

"Not really."

"If something happens to him—"

"Then, something will, but we'll get along, you and me."

"Yes, we'll get along," Josie said, and she reached for his hand and squeezed it. Then she stepped aside and said, "I might change my mind tomorrow."

He stiffened. "You mean—"

"I might go hunting. Good night, Oliver."

She turned away, walked toward the cabin she shared with Mike, and as she disappeared from sight Oliver was wondering, *What does she mean? What will she do tomorrow? If she takes care of Mike, half of the job is done. Maybe all of it. The thing for me to do is wait—wait—and push Josie. Push her hard.*

They went hunting again, the next day, but with no success. Mike got two shots at a deer, but at a prohibitive distance. Josie did not fire her rifle, not even once. Nor did Oliver.

After supper that evening Oliver talked to her briefly. He asked, wryly, "How was the hunt?"

She shook her head. "I held back. I did some thinking."

"Constructive?"

"I'm not sure." She lowered her voice. "Did you ever kill anyone?"

He spoke quickly. "Never."

"I don't think it would be hard." She looked across the room at her husband. He stood in front of the fireplace, talking to Syd Acuff.

Oliver was not sure what to say. He stood silent.

"I wouldn't want to be caught," Josie said. "That's what I got to thinking—that I was afraid I might be caught. If I thought I could get by with it—"

"An accident is an accident," Oliver said gruffly.

"Maybe so."

"Things like that happen."

She sighed, then smiled faintly. "I have to do more drinking. I am not a very courageous woman. I live by impulse."

It occurred to him that he lived by impulse. He had put up with Beth for a long time—then one night he had done something. If Josie was triggered by the right impulse she might use her rifle on Mike—but it was just as possible that she would never take a step to hurt him. He scowled, and he thought, *I'll wait several days. I'll give Josie a chance to get impulsive. If she doesn't, I'll fix one of Mike's rifles.*

Two days passed, then two more. He surprised himself, got his deer, one with more points than Mike's. But nothing else happened. Twice Josie went hunting, twice she stayed in camp. She seemed alternately moody and happy. Twice it rained but she did not seem to mind it.

A week had passed, and on that seventh evening Mike said, "What do you think, Oliver? Should we stay two more days?"

Oliver shrugged. "Why not? Who wants to go back to work?"

Mike looked at his wife. "How about you?"

She sounded indifferent. "Two more days won't hurt."

Mike laughed. "I'm after a bear tomorrow. Saw his tracks in the creek bed."

"I'll help you," Oliver said.

"Nope, I want him myself. You and Josie try something else."

Oliver looked at the woman but her head was turned away. Maybe, tomorrow she would feel the impulse to act on what she had been thinking, but more likely she would do nothing. It was time to make a few small alterations on one of Mike's rifles. He could try it tonight while Mike and Syd Acuff played gin-rummy. But that might be risky. More easily he could make the alterations tomorrow afternoon. Mike would leave one rifle at camp, he always did. Mike was a man of habit. The next day he would use his alternate rifle, and when he did, boom! No more Mike!

The next morning Mike left early, after his bear, and a little while later Oliver and Josie set off on their own, but they kept on this side of the creek. Both were silent. Josie seemed tired, uninterested in hunting anything. Oliver was tense and thoughtful.

"We could drift off to the creek," he suggested. "We might even run across Mike."

She shook her head. "Why? I couldn't—do anything."

"Want to go back?"

"Yes. I think I do. This afternoon I'd like to go swimming up the creek and don't tell me it's too cold."

He grinned, thinking he would have a good chance to work on Mike's alternate rifle while she was swimming, but he said, "I'm ready to go back to camp, anytime."

They were back before noon, they had lunch, then Josie headed up the creek to where there was a pool. Oliver did not even think of following her. When she was out of sight of the camp he walked

to the cabin she shared with Mike. The alternate rifle was where he expected. He sat down at the table and got to work. He had brought with him a steel, rifled sleeve. It would fit into the rifle's barrel, blocking the jacketed shell. With the sleeve in place, an explosion was inevitable if the trigger was pulled. And if he improved on the shell, if he added explosive and some jagged bits of steel, what he would have was similar to a grenade. Quite a lethal machine. The jagged bits of steel worried him, but this was far up in Maine, and there should not be much of an autopsy. Most likely, the explosive would seem the result of a fault in the rifle. And if the rifle was pretty well broken up, who could ever determine the cause?

He was rather pleased with what he was doing. Tomorrow, if Mike used his rifle, he was dead. That still left Josie but at first he would not have to worry about her. Later on he would handle her as he had to. She would be no problem.

He finished his work with the rifle, stood up, and jerked around, catching his breath. Someone had come in. If it was Mike—

He relaxed. He even grinned. There was nothing to worry about. It was Josie who had stepped inside. She had been swimming, but was back. Her hair was still wet from the icy pool and her eyes were sparkling. "You should have gone with me. What are you doing?"

"Nothing." He motioned vaguely with his arm.

A frown crossed her face. "That's Mike's rifle, on the table."

"I was thinking of using it."

"On me?"

"Not you. Take a look through the window, the front window."

She stepped that way, looked outside. The window was open. Across the clearing were trees and shrubbery but to the side an old log road pointed the way down the hill. The turn of the road was almost two hundred yards away.

"I don't see anything," Josie said.

"We head down that road when we go hunting," Oliver said. "When Mike comes back he'll come up the road."

Her eyes widened. "You thought of—"

"I guess not." He shook his head. "It was just an idea."

It was not even that. He was using it as an excuse to explain why he was here. It would have been a foolish

thing to shoot a man this close to camp. It never could have been considered an accident.

Josie was still staring at him. "But you did think of it."

"I suppose so."

She moistened her lips. "Syd Acuff is away. He went for supplies. No one is here but you and me. When Mike comes up the road—"

"No."

"Why not?" Josie was tense, excited. He could hear her hard breathing. She was leaning toward him.

"Mike won't get back until dark, most likely," Oliver said. "If he got here earlier—"

"What if he does?" She walked forward, picked up the rifle lying right on the table, the rifle which Oliver had tampered with so it was now an explosive machine. "What if he should come back early? One quick shot—that's all we would need. It could seem like an accident."

"But it might not seem like an accident," Oliver said.

"If you backed me up, or if I were to help you—"

He was nervous by the way she was holding the rifle. She was not pointing it at him but if it went off accidently it would explode. It would spray them both with bits of steel. He stretched out his hand. "Forget it, Josie. We'll try something else."

She looked back to the window, stepped that way, and she had not given him the rifle. She was still carrying it.

He started toward her. "Josie, I think we ought to—"

"Oliver! He's down there at the end of the road. He's headed this way!" Her words were sharp, vibrant, her body had stiffened.

"He couldn't be back yet," Oliver cried. "Josie—"

She looked around at him, her eyes glistening. She raised the rifle, fitted it against her shoulder, nestled her cheek against the cold metal of shell chamber. Her voice was a harsh whisper, "Oliver! Oliver! I can do it! Suddenly I can do it. I told you if the impulse was right—" She was aiming it through the open window.

He dived toward her. "Josie! Josie, don't—"

His hand was stretching toward the rifle when she squeezed the trigger. He was vaguely aware of the blast of the explosion, and of a searing pain — but that was all. All for him and all for Josie. There was not even any time for any regrets. . . .

what's new in crime

by Stefan Santesson

There will no doubt be many who will feel that the character of the old Princess Karukhina, whose murder is told of in Mary Kelly's new novel, THE CHRISTMAS EGG (Holt, Rinehart Winston, $3.95), is an exaggerated one—that people like her do not exist.

And in a sense the latter is of course true—the men and the women of Princess Olga Karukhina's generation are, with rare exceptions, long since gone.

Survivors of a generation which had different ways, and as unable to understand what had happened to them as were the French aristocrats of the 1790's—the many, and there were many, who had saved nothing from the debacle, or who had over the years pawned or sold the few things they had brought with them, often died—in Harbin or in Shanghai, in Paris or London or in New York—of hunger, or malnutrition, or of the normal dis-

---

The writer, editor of THE AWARD ESPIONAGE READER, an anthology of spy stories just published by Award Books, has been editor of this magazine since 1956. Formerly 1945-'52, editor of the Unicorn Mystery Book Club, he was awarded the 1963 Critic's Edgar by the M. W. A.

eases of old age.

Or of a broken heart, knowing they could never return to the Russia they had known—or thought they knew—a Russia which their children or grand-children, born in exile, neither knew nor understood.

Formidable old women such as Olga Karukhina were not unusual. They were not all foolish, regretting only the disappearance of the life they had enjoyed without understanding, or intolerant representatives of an *ancien regime* which knew only the past, and refused to understand the present. Some of them showed an unexpected flair for business, more so than the men who in the main knew nothing more than how to be officers and gentlemen. And some retreated into the shadows, as did Olga Karukhina, hoarding what they had brought with them, looking at it all only in the small hours of the night when, for a bittersweet moment, one could remember the past.

No. Olga Karukhina, in her later years, is very credible. As is the story of her murder. And her murderer.

Do read this.

Joan Fleming's new Nuri Bey novel, NOTHING IS THE NUMBER WHEN YOU DIE (Washburn, $3.95), hasn't got quite the charm of her earlier, WHEN I GROW RICH, winner of the Crime Writers' Award for the best crime novel of 1962, but Nuri Iskirlak's adventures in Oxford are delightful and in character.

"On this hot day in August in the year 1999 there are—give or take a few thousand—thirty-five million people in the City of New York." SM author Harry Harrison, describing police procedure and a murder investigation, in MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! (Doubleday, $3.95), paints a cheerless but logical picture of what life will be like in over-crowded New York—the life of the privileged, and the life of the less privileged. Do read this.

Sara Woods' New Anthony Maitland novel, ENTER CERTAIN MURDERERS (Harper & Row, $4.50), is as effective as her earlier novels built around the personality of this London barrister, a reluctant catalyst for trouble and mayhem. Do read this.

Mary Stewart's new novel, AIRS ABOVE THE GROUND (Mill-Morrow, $4.95), deals with young Va-

nessa March's discovery of a number of things she did not know about her husband, and the discovery of a lost Lipizzan stallion, eventually returned to the Spanish Riding School. In the course of coping with these problems, and with matters of interest to Interpol, Vanessa March and her young protege see a side of the Austrian countryside, with its clear air, rolling meadows, and castles lost in the mists of time, which should make many of you anxious to see it yourselves. Recommended. Do read this.

Rafe Tyrrell, sometime Shakespearian actor, and more recently involved in the Pleasant Hill post office "job", had been sent to Farways prison in Granchester. Detective Chief Inspector Martineau of the Granchester police realized that not only Tyrrell's friends, but also independent operators, would want to get their hands on the only man who knew where the Five Hundred Thousand Pounds obtained at Pleasant Hill had been hid. A half-million Pounds would interest a lot of people....

Maurice Proctor's new Chief Inspector Martineau novel, HIS WEIGHT IN GOLD (Harper & Row, $4.50), represents a departure in that we are witness as much to criminal procedure as to police procedure, as each side attempts to cope with the problems involved.

Do read this.

Ross Thomas' THE COLD WAR SWAP (Morrow, $3.95) is the story of Michael Padillo and Mac McCorkle who operate a bar in Bonn, until those who decide such matters come to the conclusion that Padillo is expendable. An amortized agent, whom they can write off like a tax loss.

Padillo had been the kind of agent everybody denied existed. On this last (and final) assignment, he had crossed over into East Berlin and only then discovered that "the opposition was expecting a new prize for its zoo" —him. This, needless to say, was a minor detail which had not been explained to him before his departure.

THE COLD WAR SWAP, in other words, raises some uncomfortable possibilities, which our more vociferous press would be quick to challenge as impossible. Unfortunately espionage and counter-espionage, as Mata Hari and others found out, operates according to rules which are preculiar to the profession.

John and Emery Bonett's THE PRIVATE FACE OF MURDER (Doubleday, $3.50) will introduce many to Inspector Salvador Borges of the Spanish police, as he investigates the tangled affairs of the English expatriates who have settled in Calatrava—and among whom death has struck, not once but twice. There are some beautiful characterizations, particularly that of Aubrey de Lamplew, whose death precipitates the investigation.

Van Siller's latest novel, THE MOOD FOR MURDER (Doubleday, $3.50), is an exceptionally good study of a number of unpleasantly pleasant people, and of Suzie Bolton's fight for sanity—not to mention survival—among these men and women who, each and every one of them, are certain that she has flipped.

As in earlier Van Siller novels, the author has chosen to describe a group of people whom many of us would not personally know. To this extent, these novels can be described as sophisticated *pigasch novellen* of the mid-sixties.

And as such, they are often very good.

(Continued from page 117)

knew there was no longer a note to implicate you. And that knowledge is what finally gave you away."

Sonia frowned; then she said angrily, "But I'm a good harpist, as good as Drujinsky. So when Philip wrote me that Isabel was going to play tonight, I *had* to kill him, didn't I?"

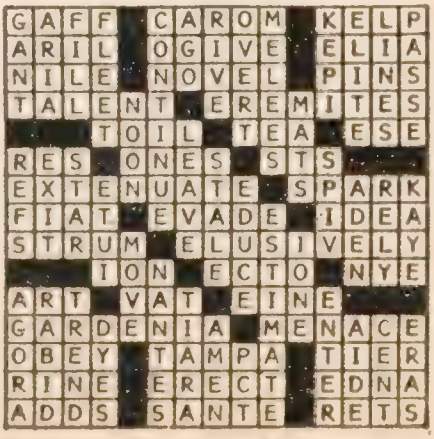
"Sure," Eckhart agreed placidly, "you had to kill him. That's good enough for me."

THE SOLUTION

to the

PUZZLE

on page 119



ARE YOU "DIGGING YOUR GRAVE WITH YOUR TEETH"?

HAVE YOU TRIED TO LOSE WEIGHT - - AND FAILED?

ARE YOU AFRAID TO STOP SMOKING?

75c
NOW YOU CAN QUIT SMOKING And NOT GAIN WEIGHT!
EAT, DRINK and BE SLIM
DIETING CAN BE A PLEASURE
STOP COUNTING CALORIES... JUST WATCH YOUR CARBOHYDRATES
EAT, DRINK and BE SLIM!

Here is the ONLY diet that will HELP YOU REDUCE, and at the same time permit you to:

- *Eat all the meat and fat (steaks, chops, eggs, cheese, butter) you want;*
- *Drink as many cocktails and highballs as usual;*
- *Quit, or cut down on smoking;*
- *Stop counting calories.*

This is the revolutionary new LOW CARBOHYDRATE diet you've been reading about in the newspapers and magazines, hearing about on radio and T V. Thousands of people have tried it, and discovered that dieting can be simple, getting slim can be fun. *YOU CAN DO IT, TOO!*

75c At All Newsstands, Book, Drug and Chain Stores.

OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS, INC., Dept. SD 1066
30 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 10017.

I am enclosing $..... Please send me the copies listed below of **EAT, DRINK and BE SLIM!:**

☐ 1 copy 85c, ☐ 3 copies $2.00, ☐ 6 copies $3.50, ☐ 12 copies $6.00

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State..... Zip Code.....

let there be night!

by Morris Hershman

CURT Yarett couldn't wait to get away from the dinner table. He tapped his lips with a napkin and crumpled it up as he pushed his chair backwards.

"I'll leave you to—that," he said awkwardly.

Edna, his wife, smiled vaguely at the champagne, dated 1993, which had been a good vintage year, and the best item in Yarett's small cellar. The mirror on the wall as he turned around showed him the avidity with which she popped the cork open and poured.

"Whatever you do," he said, "keep out of sight till you get over the next binge. You know what it'll mean if—"

"You're afraid," Edna said gleefully. "You think I'll let everybody know you're married to a lush."

"You might not be able to help yourself."

"I can do it—where you going? Some girl friend?"

"What do you care, as long as you've got something to

Who will be Tomorrow's criminals? What will the world be like, the Day after Tomorrow? Novelist Morris Hershman, a longtime SM contributor, suggests a possible answer in this grim little vignette of an orderly world which has "come a long way" since the dark old days.....

---

drink?" Curt Yarett asked bitterly.

Strains of auto-music followed him as he punched the wall-button savagely. His coat was brought to him on a servo-hook. The servo had recently been installed; and Yarett sometimes found himself wishing he'd not been forced to dismiss a loyal maid who'd been with him for years. But then he knew that all progress exacts a price. For every step forward, man has to take half a step back.

He stepped out to the glass-enclosed street, with its modulated temperature. Seen from here, the sky always looked puffy and grayish. Only on one of his frequent SST trips did Yarett ever get to see the real bright blue color of the sky, and he wished he could see it more often than that. But it was another example of the forward-back principle. One step forward and half a step back.

Despite the perfect temperature, Yarett's nose was running slightly and his eyes had become watery, all in the last few minutes. He walked carefully and precisely across Lyndon Johnson Avenue, although he was more in a hurry than he had expected to be at this time. He needed a block and a half before getting to the five story building on President Rudolph Pettingill Plaza. The open front shop on the first floor, with its huge white-on-gray sign, was closed for the night. Yarett pursed his lips angrily, then rushed into the building entrance and the sun-riser. He stood in the path of the artificial sun rays, and felt himself being raised to the second floor. At the stopping point, signalled as usual by a slight wheeze in the unseen machinery, Yarett stepped off and onto the corridor. He shook himself when he got out of the machine; it carried him efficiently enough, but the excess warmth of the artificial rays always bothered him. Well, one step forward. . . .

The sound of his knocking on the door of Room Number 8 echoed briskly down the corridor. The door was opened quickly on a young woman with a warm, throaty voice.

"You had an appointment during the day," she started.

"I know that, Fleur, but I couldn't get to it," Yarett said, leaving the door unlocked back of him as he walked into the room. "You've got to come down to the store and help me."

"You shouldn't 've been late," the girl named Fleur pointed out.

Yarett wiped his runny nose. "I've been with my wife

and—well, I'm worried about her. The trouble has been coming on for a long time and now I don't think Edna can stop herself any longer."

Fleur lowered her voice. "Do you mean that your wife is a—a criminal?"

"I'm afraid so."

He jumped in spite of himself as the doorbell rang. Fleur walked to the door and fell back as it opened on Edna. Curt Yarett's wife stood swaying from side to side against the doorframe, setting up a tattoo that rasped the nerves. Spittle rolled down one side of her mouth and onto her shabby dress and coat.

"What a pair of beauties," she said harshly.

She tried to strike out, then, hitting Fleur hard in the face with one hand and reaching up for the soft dark hair with the other hand. Too much champagne had taken away her strength, however. Her nails raked Fleur's chin and then she stood breathing heavily and leaning on the doorframe.

Yarett called out sharply, "You *know* why I'm here."

"Sure, sure."

Yarett shifted to the attack. "Didn't I tell you not to let yourself get seen in public? Didn't I tell you that you'd get in bad trouble?"

"You told me. You always tell me."

"Edna, you were out on the street and the block cameras will certainly have your pictures taken two minutes apart." Yarett's voice was tight with urgency. "It may not be so o b v i o u s that you're—"

"Drunk," Edna said proudly, sticking out her tongue and retracting it only to raise her voice. "Drunk as they come."

"I started to say, Edna, that if you've been seen by witnesses and reported, then you ought to get as far away as possib——no, it's too late!"

The police presence could be heard in this building. In no time at all, black-uniformed men appeared in this room and asked their questions. Yarett had to admit that his wife was a chronic alcoholic. The police handled Edna, now in tears, with the greatest consideration. As soon as she was under jacket restraint, her sobs ceased. She was led out of the room. Yarett knew he'd never see her again, and that a divorce would be granted automatically, by law. Alcoholism had been viewed for years as uncontrollable and therefore a criminal offense.

Fleur said to him, "Your eyes are watering and your nose is running. You'll be in

a bad way if I don't attend to you very soon. Come on downstairs."

They took the steps down to the storefront on President Rudolph Pettingill Plaza, with its huge gray and white sign, FLEUR MICHEL, HEROIN/MORPHINE INJECTIONS AVAILABLE.

"Drug addiction used to be a criminal offense many years ago," Fleur said as she unlocked the door. "The world has come a long way since then."

And NOW the newest and finest PAPERBACK editions of *LESLIE CHARTERIS'* book-length novels.

The following titles are now on sale:

101—The SAINT Steps In
102—The SAINT Sees It Through
103—The SAINT Closes The Case
104—The Avenging SAINT
105—The SAINT'S GETAWAY
106—The SAINT in New York
107—Enter the SAINT
108—The SAINT Meets His Match
109—Featuring the SAINT
110—Alias the SAINT
111—The SAINT Overboard
112—The SAINT—The Brighter Buccaneer
113—The SAINT vs Scotland Yard
114—The SAINT and Mr. Teal

Additional titles will be announced as released. Ask for these books at your newsdealer or use the coupon below . . . copies will be rushed to you. 50¢ per copy at your newsdealers—60¢ by mail.

FICTION PUBLISHING CO. **1066**
30 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.

Please send me the following SAINT novels:

☐ The SAINT Steps In
☐ The Avenging SAINT
☐ The SAINT'S Getaway
☐ Enter The SAINT
☐ The SAINT Sees It Through
☐ The Saint Overboard
☐ The SAINTand Mr. Teal
☐ The SAINT Closes The Case
☐ The SAINT in New York
☐ The SAINT Meets His Match
☐ Featuring The SAINT
☐ Alias The SAINT
☐ The SAINT–Brighter Buccaneer
☐ The SAINT vs Scotland Yard

I am enclosing 60¢ per copy for a total of $.....

Name .....

Adress .....

City ..... Zone..... State .....

children of judas

by Edward D. Hoch

PETRY was not a man to waste time. The meeting in room 323 of Athens' largest hotel had been set up for three o'clock exactly, and by ten minutes after the hour he was on the phone to the contact number, asking what had happened to his man. As it happened, Jenkins arrived just as he was hanging up, so the meeting began no more than fifteen minutes behind schedule. Petry made a note of the waiting time in his leather-bound notebook, because he'd found it good business over the years to make notes of everything.

Then, over a pale scotch-and-water, Petry came to the point. "You know my business, Mr. Jenkins. My time these days is quite valuable, to say the least."

Jenkins was a tall, tanned pseudo-Englishman of a type Petry had dealt with many times before. He carried himself casually, with a cigarette constantly between his fin-

George Petry, who hadn't been "home" in ten years, considered himself a merchant, a seller of a product. He had long ago stopped trying to distinguish between right and wrong. He bought and he sold. Right now he was selling... All he knew about the Children of Judas was that they were killing Communists, and that was good enough for him....

gers and a look of bored expectation frozen to his face, because that was the way he imagined real Englishmen to look. And he blinked his eyes at this hurried transaction, seeming to say that certainly no business was too important to wait while a cooling drink was consumed. "Well, now. I fear I'm not exactly in a position to complete our little transaction."

Petry swatted a fly on his arm. "Not in a position? I travelled a thousand miles to see you."

"You travelled a thousand miles to see Vergoth," the man named Jenkins corrected stuffily. "And he'd be here with me if he was available.

"Where is he?"

"In jail."

Petry's heart did a flip. A $600,000 deal was going down the drain before his eyes. He fingered the leather-bound notebook and said, very slowly, "Listen, Mr. Jenkins, I have over half a million dollars tied up in a shipload of Enfield rifles and MG-42 machine guns. Do you want them or don't you?"

Jenkins lit an English cigarette. He was playing his part to the hilt. "I'm not the buyer, you know that. Vergoth was the man you were to contact, and he's in jail."

"Where have they got him?"

"A little town across the border. They don't realize yet just who he is. He was picked up in a routine raid three days ago by the Communist police."

Petry ran a finger along his lower lip. "What do we do —just wait till he's released?"

The other man shrugged. "Men have been known to rot in Communist jails for years. If we raised a fuss to get his release, the Reds would only get suspicious and investigate him further."

"All right. I've still got a shipload of rifles and machine guns. What do you suggest, Mr. Jenkins?"

Another careful draw on the cigarette. Then, picking his words carefully, Jenkins made his move. "I have another possible buyer who would take the material off your hands. However, his bank account is somewhat limited. Say, perhaps a quarter of a million dollars."

"A quarter of a . . . ! You're out of your mind, Jenkins." Petry got to his feet, brushing another fly away, wishing he'd unpacked the bug bomb he carried in his l u g g a g e. This man Jenkins, a scum of the sort he'd encountered before many times, a reformed con man probably, who saw a

chance to turn a fast buck for himself. There was only one way to deal with his sort. "Look, I've been in the arms business a good many years now, and I know all the tricks. You buy my stuff for a quarter of a million, then sit it out till Vergoth is released from prison—if he's even in prison—and sell the goods to him for the agreed-on six hundred thousand. Only it won't work with me."

Jenkins looked flustered at the words. "Calm down, please. "I'm not used to being yelled at. All right, give me until tonight. I'll make a call across the border and see what the situation is at the jail. Maybe he's out already."

Petry smiled a bit. "And what about your other buyer?"

"Forget I mentioned it, please. I'll call you this evening, some time after nine. . . ."

For George Petry, a thirty-eight-year-old American who hadn't been home in over ten years, Athens was always like a vacation, even when it was business that brought him there. Sunny in summer and bearable in winter, the great old city was in its way even more beautiful than Rome, just as in its way Greece itself had once been greater than Rome. Petry considered himself a better expert than most on the cities of the world, because he'd visited a good many of them since he started making entries in the leather-bound notebook that never left his side. It had been a few years after the war, when he was still in his early twenties, that fate and a little cold cash placed an abandoned trainload of German arms in his possession. He'd sold it to representatives of a South American republic, and used the profits—which were considerable—to purchase more of the same. Now it was a long time later, and a good many cities had passed by in the meantime. He'd dealt in those years with dictators and revolutionaries, with tiny island kingdoms and jungle republics, he'd had his share of women in various colors, and once in Alexandria he'd even had to kill a man. He wasn't certain to this day whether the silent shadow in his hotel room had been a mere sneak thief or the agent of some foreign power. He'd been on edge during that whole transaction, and he hadn't waited to ask questions. He'd shot the man through the head, and only discovered when he turned on the overhead lights that the fellow had been car-

rying a six-inch dagger in one hand.

The gun always travelled with him, along with the bug bomb and the leather notebook, but he'd never had to use it again. Perhaps after all these wild years the word about him had gotten around. The word that he could be trusted—or that he carried a gun and could use it.

So it was Athens again, the only free country remaining in the Balkans, and this time it was a delivery to be made behind the Iron Curtain. He liked to think he was helping to battle Communism with deals like this one, but he was always careful not to question the people too carefully, not to dig too deeply. He didn't want to know more than he should.

Vergoth to him was only a name which had hardly even reached the foreign dispatches to the *New York Times* as yet. George Petry knew only that the man who bore that name claimed a following of fifty thousand men in the Balkan states, men he needed to arm against the various Communist governments. In the beginning, Jenkins had been no more than a name either, a name signed to a letter which arrived at Petry's Paris office. Jenkins was the contact, the man who would guide Petry to the meeting with Vergoth, somewhere off in the hills near the Greek border, where the final arrangements could be made for landing the boatload of arms after payment had been received. Usually, in deals of this sort, payment would consist of a certified check in the proper amount, drawn perhaps on some bank in Paris or Rome. Petry was in no position to question the ultimate source of the money.

But now the man named Vergoth was supposedly in jail, and Jenkins was behaving more suspiciously all the time. Well, he'd wasted this much time already. He could at least stay around till Jenkins phoned. He consulted the leather-bound notebook once more, quickly calculating just where he could dispose of the rifles and machine guns with the least amount of loss, in case such action became necessary. It could be done, he supposed. There was always a market for such goods, if one was not too particular.

There was a knock on the door of his room, and he glanced at his watch. Not yet eight o'clock—early for Jenkins, who had said he'd phone, anyway. But he knew no one else in Athens, no one who'd be coming to see him.

He opened the door and looked into the uncertain eyes of a moist-skinned young woman. Under certain circumstances she might have been called beautiful, but here under the cold harsh light of the hallway she only appeared apprehensive, as if not knowing what she was getting herself into. "Mr. Petry?"

"Yes?" He stood aside to let her enter, because he never worried about strange young women visiting him. He took sex as he found it.

"I'm sorry to bother you, but I felt I couldn't let you go through with this deal without trying my best to stop it. I..."

"Hold on, hold on!" He gave her a reassuring smile. "I don't even know yet who you are. Let's have names first."

"Sara Kent," she said, managing to slow down. "As you can see, the name's more English than I am. My father married a Greek girl." He noted her avoidance of speaking of her mother directly. "But that was a long time ago, and needn't concern us, Mr. Petry. I'm here about your arms business."

"I don't often have such charming visitors on business matters. Could we send down for something to drink?"

"No. I'm afraid not. It's about Vergoth. You know him?"

Petry shrugged. "A name in a letter. I'm sure you must know him better than I do. What about him?"

"He's the leader of the Children of Judas. You know that, too, I suppose."

"My dear Miss Kent—it is Miss, isn't it?—you must understand that these various internal nationalistic movements do not concern me. I am a merchant, a seller of a product. I long ago stopped trying to distinguish between the right and wrong of my far-flung operations. I have a staff of twenty back in Paris, and representatives in a dozen other cities around the world. I buy and sell, and right now I'm selling. All I know about Vergoth's Children of Judas is that they're killing Communists, and that's good enough for me. I don't sell to Reds."

"Do you have a cigarette? Thank you." She lit it, and the flare of the match reflected off her glistening face. "Let me tell you something about the Children of Judas, Mr. Petry. Something you may not have known."

"I'm a good listener."

"First, their name. The Children of Judas was origi-

nally the name of a supposed Seventeenth Century cult of vampires that terrorized the area of Serbia, Bulgaria and Rumania."

"A land of superstitious people. Always has been. Do you think the current Children of Judas are vampires, too?" he asked her with a touch of a smile.

She ignored his humor and hurried on. "Their victims were always found with the Devil's stigmata cut into their flesh—cut or burned. It was an XXX, signifying the thirty pieces of silver that Judas received. You may be interested to know that Vergoth's people are carrying on the tradition. Their victims have the XXX branded into the flesh."

"They're killing Communists. That's all that interests me." He was beginning to lose interest in this strange girl opposite him.

"But that's just the point! They're not just killing Communists. They're killing farmers, and children, and innocent people! They're only interested in getting the Communists out so they can take over the Balkans for themselves. The Children of Judas are nothing but a large band of murderers and terrorists, most of them with criminal records dating back to pre-Communist days. Once they have rifles and machine guns, there's no telling where they'll stop."

"You seem to know a great deal about my business dealings, Miss Kent."

"I was working for Mr. Jenkins until last week. I saw some of the early correspondence. Mr. Petry, my father was killed by these people."

"Of course I'm sorry to hear that, and I'm sure there's a good deal of truth in what you say about Vergoth and his followers, but you must realize my position. It's too late for me to turn back at this point without the loss of a great deal of money."

"Is money more important than innocent lives?"

"Please, let's have no sermons. I won't save any lives by losing my shirt on this transaction. As a matter of fact, I imagine. . . ." The buzzing of the hotel phone cut through his argument.

"Mr. Petry?" the familiar voice asked when he'd answered it.

"Jenkins. Good to hear from you." He glanced at the girl. "Any news?"

"Yes, something promising. Can I come up? I'm right down in the lobby."

Petry thought fast. "Why don't I come down instead? We can get a drink and a late

supper."

"All right. I'll be watching for you."

Petry hung up and turned to the girl. "I have to go. You can stay here and wait for me if you'd like."

"When will you be back?"

He shrugged. "By midnight, I suppose."

"No thanks. We'll talk again, Mr. Petry, at a better time. Meanwhile, please remember what I've told you. And don't trust Jenkins too far. He isn't really English, you know."

"I know. Where's he from?"

"He never said. But don't trust him." She picked up her purse and went to the door. "I'll be turning up. Don't be surprised."

He waited a few minutes until she was gone, then started down himself, hoping Jenkins hadn't been watching the elevators too closely. In the lobby he found the man seated behind a potted palm, reading the evening newspaper. "This place has good food," Jenkins greeted him. "In here."

Over a plate of vague Greek food Petry asked, "Have you contacted Vergoth?"

"In a way. I've been able to contact his people. They're planning to rescue him in two days."

"You mean from jail?"

Jenkins nodded. "They're watching the place and making their plans. They'll wait two days to give us time to arrive on the scene."

"We're supposed to go there?"

"Correct. Once he's out of jail, Vergoth will have to go into hiding immediately. The police will suddenly be aware of his true identity, and will spare no efforts to recapture him. Therefore, the only possible time for a meeting is immediately after his escape. You and I must be there in two days."

"And how do we cross the border?"

"That is being arranged."

"Look, me getting shot inside some Communist country isn't part of the deal. I'll wait here. You can bring me the certified check."

Jenkins pursed his lips. "I'm afraid that would be impossible."

"Why?"

"Well, frankly, Vergoth would never give me the check. He would insist on delivering it directly into your care."

"You were ready to give me a check for a quarter of a million just this afternoon."

"That was different. You refused and now you must deal directly with Vergoth.

I'll take you to him."

"All right," Petry agreed with a sigh. "How do we get there?"

"Meet me in the lobby tomorrow morning at nine. Be packed for a trip of a few days, but keep your hotel room. We don't want anyone to know you're leaving town. We'll be traveling by boat, by the way. That's all you need to know now."

"By boat?"

Jenkins rose from the table. "I'll see you at nine, Mr. Petry."

For some seconds P e t r y watched the man thread his way between the tables to the door. Then he caught the waiter's eye and ordered another drink. . . .

The morning dawned like a fireball over the waterfront, and after picking up a bottle of *retsina* wine for the journey, Petry joined Jenkins in the lobby. The would-be Englishman was almost in disguise, with a large straw hat half obscuring his ruddy face, and a canvas jacket and white ducks that were a far cry from his costume of the previous day.

"Ready?" he asked.

"All set. What about food?"

"Autumn's seeing to that."

"Who?"

"Autumn. He's Greek, despite the name. I use his boat on occasion. It sleeps four."

Something in the way Jenskins spoke these words seemed to imply a fourth passenger, and Petry wondered about it all the way to the dock. Then, in a sudden glimpse of revelation, the riddle was solved. Waiting there on the steps for them was Sara Kent, obviously dressed for the trip.

"Hello," she said, her voice betraying nothing.

"Miss Sara Kent," Jenkins introduced her. "A former secretary of mine. I ran into her at your hotel yesterday and decided she might prove useful on the trip."

Petry pondered the meaning of the words, but could reach no conclusion. Certainly Jenkins might s u s p e c t some contact between them, and wish for that reason to just keep them together. Yet it was just as logical that he might have brought the girl along merely as a sleeping companion. Another half-formed thought crossed Petry's suspicious mind. Could the girl really be in the employ of Jenkins all the time? Could her visit to his room and her warning be all a part of some dubious plot on Jenkins' part?

The boat was a surprisingly seaworthy-looking little schooner, a twenty-eight-

footer with sails already in place for the voyage. On deck, pulling at a rope that wound itself around the main mast like Eden's serpent, was a man of astounding appearance. This, Petry knew, must be Autumn, an Ahab-like Greek with high, broad shoulders glistening now naked in the morning sun. His face, if you call it that, was more an evil mask for some Greek tragedy, a ripple of scar tissue that extended from forehead to chin. But on Autumn the scars of life provoked no sympathy. They seemed somehow almost a part of his character, and after the first meeting with the man, the first gripping of his scaled, oily hand, the face was a part of him, an evil reflection of his soul as surely as the portrait by Basil Hallward had reflected the soul of Dorian Gray. And if Autumn lacked the wooden leg of Ahab, he did indeed have a noticeable limp in that same right leg. (Petry corrected his own rambling thoughts at this point, remembering that Ahab's leg had been carved from whalebone rather than wood.)

Petry gripped the hatch and steadied himself as the schooner pulled away from the dock almost as soon as they were aboard. Already Jenkins had produced a map from somewhere, and he and Autumn were busy plotting a route around the scattered islands that had always seemed so confusing on a map. Athens itself, being some miles from the water, was already out of sight, and only the few ancient dwellings of the seacoast city of Piraeus overlooked their exit from the harbor.

"It is Greece's most important port," Sara Kent said over his shoulder. "Though you'd never know it from the looks of things. The actual harbor is a bit further along the coast."

Petry studied the shoreline as the wind began catching at the schooner's sails. "Looks like a lot of ruins to me."

"It was heavily damaged by bombing during the war, but much of it has been rebuilt now, with American aid."

"I'm glad we did something constructive."

"You did. You saved Greece from the Communists."

"That was a long time ago." He was remembering those postwar years, filled with uncertainty and youthful adventure, when every day was lived only for the present.

"The people still remember."

He glanced at Jenkins and Autumn, intent over their

charts, and lowered his voice. "What in hell are you doing here?"

"He saw me in the lobby and asked me to come along. I felt it was a perfect opportunity."

"For what?"

"I know what you're after. You're going to meet Vergoth. I want to be along. I've never met the man."

"Do you hate him that much? Because his men killed your father?"

She stared off at the receding shoreline for a moment before answering. "It wasn't his men. It was Vergoth himself who killed my father and branded him with the XXX. Vergoth is living with my mother."

This last was almost a whisper, and she turned away as she spoke it. Then Jenkins had joined them once more and there was no chance at the moment for further conversation. He waved his big hat through the sticky air, creating the hint of a breeze, and said, "It's three hundred and seventy miles to Corfu, and then we're practically there."

"Can we make the distance in two days?" Petry asked, looking up at the sails.

"On this ship we can. Autumn's got an auxiliary engine that really burns up the water." Then, turning, "Sara, why don't you fix us something to eat? I went off without breakfast."

She went below to the tiny galley and Petry glanced over at Autumn, silent by the ship's wheel. "Does he need any help with this thing?"

Jenkins was unbuttoning his shirt. "Hell, no! Just stretch out on the deck and enjoy the sunshine. You'll get plenty of chance later for helping out."

A half-hour later, Jenkins was asleep, but Petry continued to stare off at the distant shoreline, wondering for the first time exactly what he was doing there. . . .

The voyage passed uneventfully after a brief excitement on the first night when a ship passed too near them in the dark. Autumn did not seem to believe in running lights, and here there was apparently no Coast Guard to enforce any regulations on the subject. That night also, Petry discovered quite by accident that Sara Kent carried a tiny automatic pistol strapped to her side with adhesive tape. He had no doubt when and where she intended to use it, and he hoped he could complete his deal with Vergoth first.

On the second day, toward evening, he tried to strike up

a conversation with the silent Autumn. "What's that out there, Autumn? A jellyfish of some sort?"

The ugly man nodded his head. "Bad thing. Sting you to death."

Petry tried to light a cigarette against the force of the foaming breeze, but finally gave it up as hopeless. "Are you one of the Children of Judas?" he asked Autumn casually.

"No politics. Only the sea," he muttered. "The sea will never betray you. Not if you know it."

"You know Vergoth?"

Autumn shook his head and fell silent again. The wind off the water was picking up, chilling the skin even through layers of waterproof clothing. After a time Petry was driven down the hatch, leaving Autumn with sole charge of his cedar-planked deck.

They passed through the Channel of Kerkyra, between Corfu and the coast, early the next morning, and before long Jenkins was pointing out the place for their landing along the rocky shoreline of Albania. "We're only sixty miles from the boot of Italy at this point," the Englishman said. "If there's trouble, that might be the safest harbor. They might follow us into Greece, but they'd never try anything in Italian waters."

"Isn't the coast guarded? Won't it be dangerous landing in daylight?"

Jenkins shook his head. "Our friends are watching for us. If any patrols are in the area, a diversion will be staged to lure them away. Come, get ready to wade ashore. We 'can't go in too close with a four-and-a-half-foot draft."

Autumn turned the craft into position, and with Sara watching from the deck, Petry and Jenkins stripped to their shorts and leaped into the neck-deep water, carrying clothing and shoes above their heads, they waded ashore with surprising ease. Before they'd finished dressing, with the dampness of his shorts uncomfortably clammy against Petry's skin, a small group of ragged men had appeared from somewhere, scurrying down the rocks to join them.

"The Children of Judas," Jenkins said, waving his hand in greeting. "Arm them and you arm a mighty striking force against Communism." He spoke a few words of Greek to one of the men. "We're just in time. The jail where Vergoth is being held is only ten miles inland."

"We walk?"

"We walk. A car or truck would attract too much attention. These people know the back routes."

Four hours later, his feet burning through their shoes, Petry paused with the others to look down into a peaceful valley sleeping in the afternoon sunshine. The building they sought, the jail, was a bit removed from the other structures of the town, set by itself at the end of a dirt road. It was a two-story structure And from where they stood Petry could see no sign of any outside guards.

"We stay here," Jenkins said.

"I should hope so!"

There were seven men in the group to attack the jail, and Petry noted that two of them carried Russian-made machine guns. Apparently the guns had been taken off the bodies of some long-dead Albanian soldiers, part of the plunder in this oddest of wars. He saw that another of the men carried a long piece of metal, and it took him some moments to realize that this was a branding iron. As he watched, they built a small fire back in the brush and warmed its end in the flames.

Then they were ready. One of them had already started down the hill to the jail, and Petry saw that he carried a bottle of something in his hand. He was some hundred yards from the jail wall when a guard appeared, carrying a rifle held casually in his hands. The bottle hurled through the air, falling far short of its mark, but almost at once a sheet of flame lashed at the still afternoon air. It was the signal for the others to move.

"There should be a truck for us," Jenkins said, glancing toward the road.

"I thought you couldn't trust trucks." From below came the ragged rattle of a machine gun.

"It's the only way. We'd never make it on foot."

A sudden thought came to Petry. "You're planning to take Vergoth with us—back to the boat!"

"Of course. We'll settle our business and land him further up the coast. There's the truck now. Come on!"

By the time their running feet had carried them to the big gray truck that had suddenly rumbled into view, the entire jail below them was in flames. Jenkins yanked open the side door of the truck and slid in beside the driver, with Petry right behind. Then they rumbled on down the road, heading straight for the inferno.

"I didn't count on this,"

Petry shouted into the Englishman's ear.

"You want to see Vergoth, don't you? We're picking him up with this truck."

They passed a body in the road, and Petry saw it was the man with the branding iron. He hadn't gotten far. Then suddenly the windshield exploded in their faces, shattered by a random burst of gunfire. The driver's scream was cut off, silenced by death, almost as soon as it had started.

Jenkins cursed and leaned across the body. "Help me push him out and I'll drive."

"Damn it, Jenkins, get us out of here!"

The Englishman chuckled. "Don't like being so near to the business end of your business, eh? What in hell did you think they did with rifles and machine guns—shoot bear?"

And then, out of the smoke and flame, a sudden figure from a nightmare yanked at the driver's door from outside, pulled the body free to take its place behind the wheel. A great bearded man in striped prison clothes, with a revolver in his hand and madness in his eyes. He wheeled the truck around and threw up a blinding cloud of dust behind us.

"We have to wait . . .," Jenkins started to protest.

"I wait for no man," the stranger growled, in a rasping approximation of English. "I am Vergoth. . . ."

The ride that followed was one to remember, or forget. Vergoth drove like the furies, looking neither right nor left, speaking nothing to either of the two men. Before many moments the sounds of the battle had been left behind, and only the open road lay before them.

"You have a boat?" Vergoth asked.

"Yes," Jenkins said, breaking his odd silence. "Turn to the right and head for the coast."

"You must be Jenkins, the Englishman. But this other man I do not know."

"George Petry. I'm the fellow with the guns."

"Ah, yes. We have business to discuss. But later, later."

The rest of the flight to the coast was almost in silence. Once they passed an Albanian army patrol car, but if the driver noticed the speeding truck with its shattered windshield, he gave no sign. But when the road ended abruptly against a sandy bluff with no schooner in sight, Jenkins was worried. "This thing'll run on sand. Pull down and go along the shore."

"And be spotted from the

cliffs?" Vergoth g r o w l e d. "Where's your boat?"

"Just a few miles to the south, I'm sure."

Vergoth shifted gears and the big truck plodded into the sand, sticking close to the shore where the outgoing tide had left a hardened surface for their roadbed. And soon there was the ship—with the tiny figures of Sara and Autumn on deck, growing larger by the minute.

"Now what?"

"We wade," Jenkins said. "Off with your clothes."

Moments later, as they pulled themselves dripping onto the deck, Autumn was already starting the auxiliary engine. The Communists would have to hurry if they were to catch them in Albanian waters now.

Sara appeared from below, her hand held oddly against her side. "You're the famous Vergoth?" she asked, as the schooner turned through the churning water.

The bearded man made a slight bow. "I am."

"I'm Sara Kent," she said quietly, her hand moving beneath her blouse.

Vergoth blinked his eyes and smiled uncertainly, and in that instant Petry moved. He threw himself at the girl, knocking her off balance just as the gun came into view. It flew from her hand and clattered onto the deck, w h e r e Jenkins quickly scooped it up. "What the hell! Damn fool girl was going to shoot you!"

"I'm sorry," Petry said, helping her to her feet, "but I have a business deal to complete."

She turned, blinded by tears, and staggered down the hatch. Vergoth had recovered himself from the initial surprise and now stood tensed on the deck. "Who is that girl? Why would she kill me?"

Petry lit a cigarette. "She claims you killed her father and married her mother."

"Fantastic!" the bearded man snorted. "I never heard of the girl, or her parents." And oddly enough, the words had a ring of truth to Petry's ears. Could Sara Kent have had another reason for wishing the death of Vergoth? Or could Jenkins have put her up to it? But Petry couldn't quite imagine Jenkins rescuing the man from prison only to murder him for some obscure political reason.

Through all the excitement, Autumn had remained at the wheel, guiding the schooner further away from the shore. Now he spoke. "Which course do we follow?"

Jenkins gazed up at the sky in thought, shielding his eyes

against the blinding glare of the afternoon sun. "Italy," he said finally, simply.

"Italy!" Petry growled the word. "No one's following us, and Greek waters are a lot closer. Why not land at Corfu?"

Jenkins blinked. "I have business in Italy. You want your damned money, don't you?"

"I deal with Vergoth, not with you."

But just then Petry didn't feel like dealing with anyone. He was sick of the whole business. He left the three men on deck and went below. Sara was curled up on one of the bunks, sobbing silently to herself.

"I'm sorry," he told her.

"Are you? Then why did you have to stop me?"

"I don't know. Suddenly there'd been too much killing for one day."

"That sounds odd coming from you."

"Does it?" He wondered. "We're heading for Italy, you know."

"What difference does it make?"

"Why did Jenkins bring you along? Did he know you'd try to kill Vergoth?"

"Maybe. I don't know myself. He's got my gun. If he wants Vergoth dead, he'll have to do it himself now. Thanks to you."

"I said I was sorry. I couldn't let you do it."

"You betrayed me. I trusted you and you betrayed me."

Petry nodded. Her words were too true. "In this sort of business I often think we're all children of Judas."

That night, while the schooner followed its random course toward Italy under a moon that was full and bright, one of them stabbed Jenkins to death as he slept in his berth. . . .

Petry found the body, sprawled lifeless in a mass of clotted red, one arm dangling in death almost to the floor. He called to Autumn, who'd been dozing on deck while he guided the ship through the night, and the ugly man limped down the steps to view the body with near indifference. The commotion had roused both Sara and Vergoth from the other two berths, and their reactions were much more immediate.

"God!" Sara gasped. "Who could have done it?"

"One of us four," Vergoth said, with surprising common sense. "There is no one else on the boat."

"He was sleeping in my berth," Autumn said at last, and the truth of these words seemed obvious to them all. It

took a moment for their full import to sink in. For Autumn's berth was the one that should have been assigned to Vergoth.

Three sets of eyes turned toward the girl, but she was ready for them. "No, you can't blame this on me. I didn't kill him, by mistake or for any other reason."

Petry finished spreading one of the sheets over the body. "Just why did you two exchange berths?" he asked Vergoth.

The bearded man shrugged. "No reason. I did not realize they were assigned to certain persons. I simply took the first one for myself."

His eyes were deep and unreadable as he spoke, but Petry was well aware that he was a killer, the only one among them who had certainly taken human life before. Jenkins would have been only one more body in a life of them, though at the moment Petry had to admit that he could find no reason for Vergoth to have killed his business associate.

"Airplane!" Autumn said suddenly, and hobbled up to the deck.

There was indeed the sound of a plane overhead. They could see it among the billowing white clouds, sneaking in and out like some bird playing hide-and-seek. "Too high to tell the markings," Vergoth decided. "Unless you have a telescope or binoculars on board."

Autumn nodded silently and went below deck. He appeared after a moment carrying the requested binoculars, but Petry didn't wait to see any more. He went through the hatch himself, back to the covered body of Jenkins, and looked at it once more. These two berths were at the center of the schooner, one on each side. He and the girl had been occupying the forward bunks. It would have been an easy matter for Autumn to drop silently down the hatch and commit the murder, just as it would have been simple for Vergoth to have done it. Sara Kent might have had a more difficult time of it, but she too could have pulled it off, provided neither Petry nor Vergoth was awakened by her wandering.

"Find anything?" she asked, suddenly behind him.

"You move quietly."

"When I want to."

"What about the plane?"

"Vergoth thinks it's of Russian make."

"Great! They'll probably try machine gunning us."

"I asked if you found anything."

"Only that Jenkins was still

wearing his canvas jacket when he was stabbed."

"Why is that? Wasn't he sleeping?"

Petry didn't answer at once. He was busy examining the canvas jacket more closely, running his finger through the bloody tear in its front. "The killer took the jacket off him after the murder and threw it in the corner, hoping it wouldn't be found."

"But why?"

The plane above them suddenly dived low, roaring directly over the schooner. Vergoth came tumbling backward through the hatch. "He's shooting at us!" he screamed. "Take cover!" As if in confirmation of the words, a row of jagged holes suddenly appeared in the wood above Petry's head.

The plane roared off toward the horizon and they ran up on deck. Autumn was there, uninjured, twisting the wheel with the skill of an old mariner. "They'll be back," he muttered, watching the sky.

"Albanian plane," Vergoth said. "Russian make. We're pretty far out now. They may not bother us any more."

Petry was checking the charts. "They better not. We're almost in Italian waters."

The plane did not return, and presently while Sara cautiously sunbathed and Autumn kept to the wheel, Petry and Vergoth settled down to business. "What about the body?" Petry asked. "The Italian officials will ask questions."

Vergoth agreed. "He'll have to be buried at sea."

"Convenient for the murderer, whichever of you it is."

"Whichever of *us* it is," Vergoth corrected. "I do not overlook you. But let us get down to business. You have a shipload of arms."

"Correct," Petry said. "Without Jenkins, there's just you and me to deal."

"What is the price of the guns?"

"Six hundred thousand dollars, deposited in a bank in Italy or some other free country."

"And where are the arms? How soon can I expect delivery?"

"They're on a ship not three hundred miles from here right now. We can transfer them to your boats somewhere off the coast."

Vergoth nodded. "Good. You will have the check as soon as we reach Italian soil. In the meantime, let us dispose of Mr. Jenkins."

They bundled him up in a portion of old sail, and with Autumn's assistance got the body finally onto the deck.

While Sara held the wheel firm they prepared to send their burden over the side. But in that final moment they were again to be interrupted. Sara called out, "There's a boat coming up fast to our stern."

There was indeed. It proved to be an Italian patrol craft, and the uniformed man in the bow was already shouting commands through a battery-operated speaker. For the time being, Jenkins was to be denied his burial at sea. . . .

The murder, by whichever of them had plunged the knife into Jenkins, held little interest for the Italian authorities. It had apparently happened in international waters, and they had no great desire to become involved. The body was being held at the local morgue, but the four of them were free on bond pending action for illegal entry of Italian waters. Since Petry carried an American passport and none of them had actually tried to land in Italy before the gunboat overtook them, it seemed doubtful if even that charge would be pursued.

But the boat was also in the hands of the authorities, and while Autumn grieved for his confiscated vessel, the others arranged for rooms at a small hotel in one of the coastal towns. Petry met Vergoth and Sara there in the evening, when the heat of the Italian sun was finally beginning to fade.

"Where have you been?" Sara asked.

Petry lit a cigarette and glanced around the shabby room with its peeling, water-stained wallpaper. "Reading the newspapers," he told them. "Then I went down to talk with the Italian officials."

"What for?" Sara asked.

He shot a glance at the bearded man before he continued. "There was an interesting dispatch in the papers. From Albania. The government reports the rebel leader known as Vergoth was killed during an attempted prison break."

The bearded man smiled. "They are overly optimistic." His right hand was held casually in his coat pocket.

"The dispatch says that Vergoth was arrested last week on some minor charge, and the police weren't aware of his identity until a group of his followers attacked the jail yesterday. But one of the captured Children of Judas identified a convict's body as that of Vergoth. They report that the only missing prisoner was a murderer named Barka."

The bearded man's hand

came out of his pocket, holding Sara Kent's tiny gun. "They must be mistaken, but let us talk about it sensibly. Don't move, either of you."

"You're Barka," Petry said, his muscles tense suddenly at the sight of the gun. "I should have realized right away that you weren't Vergoth. You didn't know Jenkins and you didn't know Miss Kent's parents. You killed Vergoth and escaped in his place, didn't you? When Jenkins told you about my shipload of guns, you killed him too, figuring to work some sort of swindle on me."

"But why should Jenkins tell him anything?" Sara wondered. "He certainly knew this wasn't the real Vergoth."

"Of course he did. And the very fact that he kept silent proves that he intended to use this man in a swindle of his own. There were too many traitors on board our boat."

The bearded man blinked his eyes, but the gun stayed firm in his hand. "All right, I'm Barka. But that doesn't prove I killed anybody."

"You killed Vergoth at the prison."

Barka chuckled. "No one will hang me for that. He was a madman, a sickly old fool who killed for no reason at all. At least I have always killed for profit."

"Including Jenkins."

"That you don't know. Not for certain. It might have been Autumn or the girl here."

But Petry shook his head. "He was wearing his jacket when he was stabbed, so I knew he wasn't asleep after all. But then why did the murderer go through the trouble of partly undressing him and putting him in the berth, to make it appear that he was asleep? I can think of only one reason. Because the berth already had blood on it, and it was *your* berth. He was sitting on it when you killed him. You couldn't use it yourself then, so you arranged things to make it appear that you two had switched berths for some reason. Of course I never even suspected Autumn, because he certainly wouldn't have left Jenkins' blood-stained jacket in the corner. He would have tossed it overboard. You couldn't do that without Autumn seeing you."

As if on cue, the door opened and Autumn came in. He'd been drinking, but at the moment he was still their best bet. "Stand where you are," Barka said.

"Autumn," Petry said, keeping his voice calm, "this man killed Jenkins. He's not Vergoth at all."

Autumn shook his head, as

if to clear it. Barka was sweating now, backing up a step as he attempted to cover them all. "Very well," he said. "We call it a draw. I killed Jenkins and I was attempting to swindle you out of the guns somehow. Since you know that, I will leave you."

His hand was on the doorknob, opening it, when Autumn moved quickly within striking distance and lashed out with a chopping judo blow to the throat. The bearded man uttered a queer gasping noise and started to crumple, but Autumn's other hand had already found its mark with a small scaling knife. Barka died standing there, before their astonished eyes, and the ugly man lowered him softly to the floor, like a baby. . . .

"These days," Autumn was saying later, as a train bound north toward Rome carried them through the night, "these days, everyone represents a cause. The cause I represent will give you four hundred and fifty thousand dollars for those guns."

Petry finished another cigarette and looked into the face of the man. With a face like that, it would have been easy to believe that he had been the most evil one of the five, but somehow Petry knew they were all guilty, like the separate fingers of a cautious but grasping hand. "Thanks, but I've decided not to sell. I've decided to unload them in some nice safe place and retire from the gun-running business for good."

"The girl?"

Petry thought of Sara, waiting for him just then in a forward compartment. "No, not the girl. And not really all the killing, either. Just a combination of everything."

Autumn twisted his mouth into a sort of grin. "I could speak to my people about more money."

"Forget it." He was wondering how long a man with a face like Autumn's could last in the dangerous game of international intrigue, where anonymity was so important.

"Very well. I won't try to convince you. There are other men with far fewer scruples."

"I know," Petry said, almost sadly. "That's what keeps the world going, I guess." He got up and went forward to join Sara. . . .

(Continued from Other Side)

MYSTERY FANS! Get 11 Great Thrillers

—9 by ERLE STANLEY GARDNER — ALL for only $1

$7.00 in Publ. Eds.
The Case of the BEAUTIFUL BEGGAR
CUT THIN TO WIN
$7.00 in Publ. Eds.
The Case of the Troubled Trustee
UP FOR GRABS
$6.45 in Publ. Eds.
The Case of the HORRIFIED HEIRS
$7.00 in Publ. Eds.
Fish Or Cut Bait
The Case of the PHANTOM FORTUNE
TRY ANYTHING ONCE
$10.95 Value in Publ. Eds.
Widow's Wear Weeds
The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax
The Resurrection Man

THIS has to be one of the biggest mystery-reading bonanzas ever to come your way! ELEVEN great thrillers—including 9 by the King of Mystery Writers, Erle Stanley GARDNER! Here, in four *double-length* volumes, are 4 of the *toughest* Perry Mason cases and 4 Donald Lam-Bertha Cool thrillers (written by Gardner under his "A. A. Fair" pen name). *And*, in a big triple-length volume, you also get Gardner's *latest* Donald Lam baffler and 2 *more* great new mysteries! All 11 mysteries would cost $38.40 in the publishers' original editions—but YOU get them ALL *for only* $1, as your introduction to the many advantages of membership in the Detective Book Club!

The Best NEW Mysteries— For LESS than 97¢ each!

Out of the 300 or more new detective books that come out every year, the Club selects the very "cream of the crop"—by outstanding authors like Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie, A. A. Fair, Mignon G. Eberhart, John Creasey and Van Wyck Mason. ALL THESE and many other famous authors have had their books selected by the Club. Many are members themselves!

Club selections are ALL newly published books. As a member, you get THREE of them complete in one handsomely bound Triple Volume (a $10.50 to $11.85 value in publishers' editions) for ONLY $2.89.

Take Only The Books You Want

You do NOT have to take a volume every month. You receive a free copy of the Club's "Preview" which will fully describe all coming selections and you may reject any volume before or after receiving it. NO money in advance; NO membership fee. You may cancel membership any time.

SEND NO MONEY

Mail Card for ALL 5 Volumes

Simply mail postcard promptly and we will send you at once the NINE complete Erle Stanley Gardner stories—PLUS TWO MORE exciting mysteries—all described on the other side. But don't delay. Mail postcard NOW to:

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I., New York 11576

SEND NO MONEY—JUST MAIL THIS POSTCARD 98-289

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB **RJ**
Roslyn, L. I., New York 11576

Please enroll me as a member and send me at once the FOUR double-length, hard-bound elitions containing EIGHT Perry Mason & A. A. Fair thrillers, PLUS the brand-new 3-in-1 volume Club selection containing the latest A. A. Fair and 2 other great mysteries. I enclose NO MONEY IN ADVANCE; within a week after receiving my books, I will either return them all and owe nothing or keep ALL FIVE volumes, containing ELEVEN first-rate mystery stories, for the special new-member introductory price of ONLY $1.00 (plus a few cents mailing charge).

As a member, I am to receive advance descriptions of all future selections, but am not obligated to buy any. For each future Triple Volume I decide to keep, I will send you only $2.89 (plus a few cents mailing charges). I may reject any volume before or after I receive it, and I may cancel my membership at any time. *(Books shipped in U.S.A. only.)*

Mr.
Mrs. .....
Miss
(Please Print Plainly)

Address .....

City .....State.....

ZIP CODE ZONE NO.

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW FOR YOUR ELEVEN MYSTERIES

NO POSTAGE NEEDED

A DIRECT HIT for ERLE STANLEY GARDNER Fans!

and All Mystery Lovers

11 GREAT MYSTERIES

including 9 by Erle Stanley GARDNER

ALL YOURS for only **$1.00** as a new member (Reg. $38.40 in Orig. Publ. Eds.)

You Get 4 *Perry Mason* Thrillers

and 4 DONALD LAM-BERTHA COOL Hits — All by ERLE STANLEY GARDNER — in 4 Double-Length, Hard-Bound Volumes!

1 The Case of the BEAUTIFUL BEGGAR
Who POISONED Daphne Shelby? Perry Mason is stumped. Then comes the *shocker!*

2 CUT THIN TO WIN
Donald Lam gives a woman $10,000 for an "accident" that now looks like an *alibi for murder!*

3 The Case of the TROUBLED TRUSTEE
Perry's client had the chance to KILL! Soon he'll have the chair. *Unless . . .*

4 UP FOR GRABS
Nurse Doon is *terrified* when a patient disappears from the hospital! She *knows* the woman who left was DEAD!

5 The Case of the HORRIFIED HEIRS
Perry's client only met Mrs. Trent once. But SOMEONE WANTS TO KILL THEM BOTH!

6 FISH OR CUT BAIT
Who DRUGGED Bertha Cool? *Not* the woman who made those threats. *She's* being *murdered!*

7 The Case of the PHANTOM FORTUNE
Perry is forced to defend *himself*. The charge? *Framing an attempted murder!*

8 TRY ANYTHING ONCE
Donald Lam is in for *trouble*. But he can't resist $2,000 for spending one night in a motel!

AND

You Also Get This Big THREE-IN-ONE VOLUME

Containing GARDNER'S Latest DONALD LAM Hit and TWO MORE New Mystery Thrillers!

9 WIDOWS WEAR WEEDS
by A. A. Fair (Gardner)
The police have eye-*witnesses* that say Donald Lam committed MURDER!

10 THE UNEXPECTED MRS. POLLIFAX
by Dorothy Gilman
Mrs. Pollifax spies for the CIA and ends up in a *painful* interrogation!

11 THE RESURRECTION MAN
by Thomas Walsh
What would you do if *your own father* committed murder!

(Continued on Other Side)

FIRST CLASS
PERMIT No. 47
Roslyn, N.Y.

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
No postage stamp necessary if mailed in the United States

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I.
New York 11576